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MALLARMÉ'S *SAINTE*: AN EPITOME OF SYMBOLISM

Only sixteen short lines: yet Mallarmé contrived to make of this early poem (1865: he was only 23) an epitome of his own and of the future Symbolist method.

A la fenêtre recélant
Le santal vieux qui se dédore
De sa viole étincelant
Jadis avec flûte ou mandore,

Est la Sainte pâle, étalant
Le livre vieux qui se déplie
Du Magnificat ruisselant
Jadis selon vêpre et complie:

A ce vitrage d'ostensoir
Que frôle une harpe par l'Ange
Formée avec son vol du soir
Pour la délicate phalange

Du doigt que, sans le vieux santal
Ni le vieux livre, elle balance
Sur le plumage instrumental,
Musicienne du silence.

The poet himself, in a letter to Henri Cazalis, calls it "un petit poème *mélodique* que me demandait Madame Brunet," whose *fête* was on Saint Cecilia's Day. In another letter, written next day to Théodore Aubanel, he says: "C'est un petit poème *mélodique* et fait surtout en vue de la musique".

Thus we have here one of the first deliberate efforts made by

the poet to "repandre son bien" from music, which he attempts more ambitiously towards the end of his career in the *Coup de dés* (see his preface to the latter).

For *Sainte* is music made visible as well as audible; music for the intellect and for the senses; and at the last, brought back to the perfection of the silent, the ideal, the increate. This concluding transformation permeates all Mallarmé's work, and is the very essence of his poetic doctrine, which insists on suggestions rather than statement: for statement has no over-tones and is far too positive, that is to say, too loud with facts.

Music for the intellect: you find it here in the recurrence of an idea, reappearing in many forms, in the same way as phrases or motifs recur in a musical composition. The principal recurring motif is that of evanescence: "*santal vieux*", "*se dédore*", "*étincelant jadis*", "*Sainte pâle*", "*livre vieux*", "*ruisselant jadis*", "*vol du soir*", "*phalange du doigt*" (not the whole finger, but only its tip), "*sans le vieux santal ni le vieux livre*" (the evanescent has faded almost away); until at last the motif is perfected in the closing phrase.

Music for the eyes and the ears: you find it in the form of recurrent phrases, that correspond to each other in an extraordinarily symmetrical pattern, a musical architecture. Thus "*le santal vieux*", at the beginning of line 2, is echoed by "*le livre vieux*" at the beginning of line 6. Again, "*Jadis*", at the beginning of line 4, is self-echoed at the beginning of line 8 (note that the intervals of recurrence are mathematically regular, of four-line length in each case: 2-6, 4-8).

Music for the ear: within the rhymes, an assonance, subtly transferred from the odd to the even lines in the second half of the poem, runs right through the structure in the form of a nasalised "a": *recélant, étincelant, étalant, ruisselant, Ange, phalange, balance, silence*. And in twelve out of the sixteen rhyme-words (*recélant, étincelant, étalant, déplie, ruisselant, complie, l'Ange, phalange, santal, balance, instrumental, silence*) there is an "l", the most liquid of all consonants — not to mention the frequent recurrence of this consonant in other positions.

Poetry is for the eye as well as for the ear; so much so that, despite his insistence on musicality, over-tone and suggestion, Mallarmé is an outstanding creator of images. Yet in this early poem his images serve a musical purpose. In other words, he *makes music visible* (curiously anticipating the technicians of the modern film-studio, who, I understand, *photograph sound*

for their sound-track, which re-transforms the images into sounds).

Mallarmé was not the pioneer in this field, of course: Baudelaire had anticipated him in the sound-colour-perfume transformations of his famous sonnet, *Correspondances*; but with less success and far less subtlety.

The reader can actually *see* the phantom melody revealed in the window's multi-stain: a faded viol; a pale saint whom we recognize (by suggestion alone: Mallarmé had given the name in his first version of the poem, and then, true to his tenet of minimum statement, removed it) as Saint Cecilia: a dim music-book containing the Magnificat; a ghostly company of musicians, brought in merely by suggestion, but formerly visible in the time-worn pattern of the window (this is one of Mallarmé's cherished "absences"). The former glory of this seraphic orchestra, half-evoked in the first two quatrains by "étincelant" and "ruisselant", blazes forth suddenly in the word "ostensoir", set conspicuously at the end of a line. For a monstrance is the symbol, visible and resplendent, of an everlasting renewal, a shining Resurrection. (The window, of course, begins to shine like a monstrance because the rays of the setting sun illumine it from without).

And now, visibly, this glory fades, like the orchestra of Saint Cecilia, no longer heard (or seen). The sun's rays are harp-strings, so that the Saint, whose viol has faded ("*sans le vieux santal*", which is not catching the full glow of sunset), may have a new instrument, gleaming with the gold that had once shone in her pictured viol. But she is immobilized for ever in the window-design, and can do no more than keep her finger-tip suspended over the light-strings—a picture of silent music.

Note that the sun's rays, at first suggesting the parallel strings of a harp, are transformed into the parallel feathers of a stylised wing (the wing of the Sun, Angel of Light). The harp is doubly attenuated: by the stylisation of the wing-image, and by the reduction of its very name to a mere adjective: "instrumental". (Heredia uses a similar device in *Fuite de Centaures*, to attenuate the fading figure of Hercules, who becomes an adjective: "l'ombre Herculéenne").

And so the silent music of the window-design, fading with the passage of the centuries as the colours lost their vigour, falls away again, after one brief burst of precarious splendour, into silence. But it is a silence more eloquent than sound, more per-

fect, because it has been transported into the domain of memory—memory, which has been lurking behind every line ever since it was conjured up by the skilful repetition of “Jadis”.

Is that not, after all, the way in which we finally and really hear music? It is never complete, and therefore never quite perfect, until the last note dies away and the *memory* of the whole lingers in the inner ear. For the physical ear could never hear more than one phrase or movement at a time. We hear music in its perfection only when it is too late—and yet not too late: “Sweet silence after bells”, as Christopher Brennan puts it so beautifully:

Sweet silence after bells!
 deep in the enamour'd ear
 soft incantation dwells.

Filling the rapt still sphere
 a liquid crystal swims,
 precarious yet clear . . .

“Precarious yet clear”: such is the unheard music of Mallarmé’s Saint Cecilia, limned in fading colours in a window soon to be darkened but unforgotten.

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GIDE'S NARCISSISM

The disconcerting complexity of Gide's personality and his work has often been described as Protean. The epithet seems at first glance singularly apt; yet, as is so often the case, the definition in question is first made by Gide himself,¹ and for that very reason ceases to be entirely satisfactory. For when Gide writes: "Je suis Protée", he implies that he is not just Proteus pure and simple, but a combination of Proteus and Narcissus. On one hand he is determined to escape simple definition and on the other is constantly striving to define himself. His *Journal*, with its appendices that take us right up to his last hours, may in fact be regarded as a vast attempt to fix and perpetuate Gide's lack of fixity. Moreover, the imaginary figures of his purely creative writings, whether they be prolongations of Gide's personality or not, all have at least one trait in common with their author, the love of self-examination, both physically in mirrors and spiritually in personal diaries or personal confession. This narcissism may well offer the critic a thread to guide him through the labyrinth, a constant factor by which to arrive at some measure of Gide's achievement.

His narcissism is not that of Mallarmé's *Hérodiade*; the act of self-contemplation is not a means of escaping from life into non-being. His mirrors are not the "sévère fontaine", the "eau froide par l'ennui dans ton cadre gelée", nor even the "eau froide-ment présente" of Valéry, but the running stream before which the Narcissus of the *Traité* kneels, the flickering reflections of the carriage-window of the express in which Amédée Fleurissoire gazes upon himself before going to his death, the moving pen of Edouard in his notebook. This latter is described by its possessor thus:² "C'est le miroir qu'avec moi je promène. Rien de ce qui m'advient ne prend pour moi d'existence réelle tant que je ne l'y vois pas reflété." Whilst this is an extreme attitude, it is doubtful if Gide is being ironic, since he has so often proclaimed his own inability to take the ordinary business of life seriously, and has filled so many notebooks of his own that we cannot differentiate him here from his imaginary novelist. Thus, for Gide, self-contemplation is not a means of escaping from the

¹ *Mercur de France*, CCCVI, p. 629. Letter to Christian Beck, 16 October 1909.

² *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (Gallimard), p. 202.

burden of existence, but on the contrary lies at the very core of existence and indeed offers the only hope of possessing reality.

But it is at this point that we meet a contradiction which runs through all Gide's best work and which is perhaps the source of all his other many contradictory attitudes. On one hand, he will have nothing to do with the self-contemplation that breeds inaction and leads to self-destruction, to the situation of Damoclès; on the other, self-contemplation when combined with the free development of the person's inner resources seems self-contradictory and leads to insincerity, to the situation of Coclès. For it is nigh impossible to give one's personality absolute freedom to determine itself and at the same time remain conscious of this evolution, since the effort to follow the development of personality comes inevitably to act as an external determining factor. The conflict between his desire for total sincerity and his narcissism torments him for many years, and it is perhaps through this, rather than through his periodic nostalgia for the certitudes of his youth, that his Calvinist upbringing takes its revenge upon him. Though he frees himself from the moral taboos of his early Protestantism, he will not and cannot free himself from the need for self-examination and, consequently, for self-possession. He is nevertheless aware that this, no less than the precepts of his childhood, will endanger his authenticity, and we find him noting in his *Journal*³: "J'ai pris ce carnet tout petit, pour pouvoir le mettre en poche . . . L'autre, trop grand, permettait trop d'apprêt." In his more lucid moments, however, Gide realized that the clash between self-knowledge menaced by pure impulse and pure impulse falsified or suppressed by self-knowledge could not be resolved by the smaller or larger format of his stationery. It was through the medium of his art, through purely literary expression, that he hoped to meet the opposing demands of his nature and attain to what one might call a super-sincerity and a super-narcissism.

He was not uniformly successful in this. In the *Nourritures terrestres*, dating from the first great creative period and written under the impact of the Algerian experiences, the total surrender to impulse, the abandonment of any critical spirit are intolerable and destroy any balance the author may have hoped for; the very paragraphing and punctuation, let alone the preciousness of the style, are irritating beyond endurance. This tendency

³ *Journal*, éd. Pléiade, p. 215 (10 May 1906).

could not, however, go for long uncorrected, and indeed in the series of brilliant works that followed Gide fully made amends for the excesses of *Les Nourritures terrestres*; if he still laughed at the disciplines imposed by society, he could not but recognize the necessity of some discipline and advocated one imposed from within. Even Lafcadio, the most gifted and favoured of his creatures, finds himself in the end at the mercy of external events for having once failed to obey the rule he had imposed upon himself.⁴

When, however, nearly thirty years later, during the composition of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* and its curious appendix, *Le Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs*, the opposite tendency makes itself felt, and Gide becomes intensely preoccupied with knowing himself as an artist rather than with creating, the suitable corrective is never or only rarely forthcoming. Between the composition of *Les Caves du Vatican* and that of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* Gide, though he may have gained a European reputation and a deal of self-assurance, has lost something infinitely more precious.

It might be objected that Gide was always preoccupied with the act of creation, often to the exclusion of what is created, and that from his very first work he constantly employed the device of "composition 'en abyme'". However, the artistic narcissism of *Paludes* and *Les Caves* is radically different in tone from that of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. This is well illustrated by a passage of *Le Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs*, where Gide writes:⁵

"Somme toute, ce cahier où j'écris l'histoire même du livre, je le vois versé tout entier dans le livre, en formant l'intérêt principal, pour la majeure irritation du lecteur."

Fortunately, Edouard never does succeed in becoming the main interest of the novel, and for that very reason the *Faux-Monnayeurs* does still have real merit as a study of manners. It is, however, worth noting in the above passage first the complacent tone and secondly the curious disrespect for the reader. Both point to a singular lack of self-criticism in a mind then so intensely concerned with its own activity. This passage, which dates from a relatively early stage in the composition of the

⁴ *Les Caves du Vatican* (Gallimard), p. 207. Lafcadio kills at ten, though he has promised himself he will not kill if a light appears before he has counted to twelve. All his later acts are dictated by causes outside himself.

⁵ *Œuvres complètes*, xiii, pp. 31-32.

novel, seems to indicate that Gide hoped to give in his novel not only a stylized representation of reality, but the novelist's struggle to arrive at this representation. In actual fact he fails to do this at all adequately. It may be that he himself had realized the impossibility of his task, when he credits Edouard with the same intentions and exposes him to the ridicule of his friends at Saas-Fée:⁶

“— . . . A vrai dire, ce sera là le sujet: la lutte entre les faits proposés par la réalité, et la vérité idéale.

L'illogisme de son propos était flagrant, sautait aux yeux d'une manière pénible. Il apparaissait clairement que, sous son crâne Edouard abritait deux exigences inconciliables, et qu'il s'usait à les vouloir accorder.”

Yet, for all his irony at Edouard's expense, two instances occur within the novel proper where Gide does attempt to show his novelist at grips with reality. In the first,⁷ we find Edouard meditating on how to overcome the apparent improbabilities inherent in his relations with the Molinier family (here Gide neatly defends himself against the same charge); in the second⁸ Edouard uses his fictional reflection of Georges to reproach Georges for his behaviour and then employs Georges' reaction as a means of resolving the situation of his fictional Georges. Both incidents display extreme technical virtuosity, but fail signally to enlighten the reader on the processes of creation, and succeed only in producing a sensation of vertigo and utter mystification. It may be said here that Gide's whole attitude to the reader throughout the composition of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* is decidedly sly, and his tacit desire to mystify peculiarly irritating. He is perhaps inspired by Diderot's *Jacques le Fataliste*; but Diderot plays fair. If he makes sport of the reader, he nevertheless invites the latter to laugh with him. Gide's attitude, by contrast, is infuriatingly “pince-sans-rire”; his frequent references to the rôle of the demon, the angel that pursues Bernard round the Latin Quarter, are surely meant to be ironic, and yet there is nothing in the style to indicate this. But after all, these sudden irruptions of the supernatural into what is in the final analysis a novel of contemporary manners are so arbitrary that the reader is entitled to some hint that the author is merely playing. By refusing any rights whatsoever to the reader, Gide gives up an essential discipline which hitherto he had instinc-

⁶ *F.-M.*, p. 240.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 116.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 458-64.

tively accepted. Contrast the conversion of Anthime in *Les Caves du Vatican*, where the style of the whole episode, deliciously parodying the novel of edification, leaves the reader in no doubt as to what importance the author himself attached to the Virgin's intervention.

But, however Gide blundered by disrespect for his reader, he erred much more seriously in that he failed to dissociate himself entirely from the aspirations of his fictional novelist. The irony of the passage quoted above is not sustained in regard to Edouard; thus, a few lines further on, he attributes to the latter three traits which are his own:⁹ namely the keeping of a record of his meditations on his proposed novel, the regret that the great nineteenth century masters did not keep such a record, the conviction that a *Journal des Frères Karamazov* would be as interesting, if not more so, than the novel itself. The final paradox is so startling that one may well think that Gide is mocking himself for his own constant preoccupation with the artist's personality rather than the actual work of art. And yet this irony, if irony there be, is probably not total and certainly not permanent. For, some years later, in *Les interviews imaginaires*¹⁰ he puts forward in all seriousness the same paradox, saying that he sets more store by the correspondence and *Journal* of Flaubert and Stendhal respectively than by their actual novels. Surely this is the Romantic preoccupation with pure personality pushed to the extremes of folly. It would follow that in the final analysis the created work serves only to ensure the immortality of the creating agent. Gide has here fallen victim to what may be called narcissism at the first level. He sees himself and is fascinated, but fails, unlike Valéry's Parquet, to see himself seeing himself. This is confirmed by his being obviously unaware that in writing the *Journal des Faux-Monnayeurs* he is tottering on the brink of an infinite regression; if it is worth while recording the pains undergone in composing a novel, then why not record the pains undergone in recording the first pains and so on *ad infinitum*? Gide seems strangely unaware of this possible absurdity; it is, moreover, significant that he could not stomach Huxley's *Point Counterpoint*, where the implications of his attitude in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* are fully drawn.¹¹

Yet in earlier years Gide was not incapable of attaining

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 240-1; cf. *Incidences* (Gallimard), p. 150.

¹⁰ p. 79.

¹¹ *Journal*, p. 1037. See also Pierre Lafille, *André Gide, romancier*, pp. 462-8.

narcissism at the second level, where he does succeed in looking at himself looking at himself. Curiously enough, even in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, he clearly sees in others the dangers to which the mania for self-examination can lead. Thus we have Armand Vedel, the tragic counterpart to Rameau's nephew, doubly impotent because conscious of his own impotence and driven by his lucidity to total despair. Or, in an earlier work, Alissa, who unwittingly counterfeits herself whilst striving to know herself, and who fails to heed her own warning: "Que ce journal ne soit pas le complaisant miroir devant lequel mon âme s'apprête . . ."¹²

If only he had always remembered the lesson of Alissa . . . but it seems that after *Les Caves du Vatican* he was unable to see himself menaced by the same dangers as his creatures. It is perhaps natural that he should treat his own situation not tragically but satirically: Gide in his "soties" is to no small degree both satirizer and satirized; and it is this ability to differentiate the "je" that speaks of itself and the "je" that is conscious of the ultimate absurdity of narcissism which gives these works their peculiar savour and makes his sense of the comic unique in French literature. Diderot comes closest to him. This self-satire is best represented in *Paludes*: it is also met with in the other "soties", but is less explicit and overshadowed by other considerations.

It is perhaps thanks to this strange gift that he achieves in *Paludes* the two aims he vainly talked of achieving thirty years later in *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, namely the composition of a "pure" novel, by which he presumably meant a novel purged of everything accidental and treating of only essences and ideas, and secondly the composition of a novel about a novel. If Gide and all his commentators have refused the title of novel to *Paludes*, that is perhaps because the concept "pure novel" is in a way self-contradictory: indeed, by subjecting the novel form to that "formidable érosion de contours" which he takes over from Nietzsche,¹³ he arrives at something that no longer merits the name of novel. But however that may be, *Paludes* is as "pure" a narrative as could be wished for; only the evanescent blushes of Angèle distract the intellect from its ideal nourishment.

But more important to the question at hand is the fact that

¹² *La Porte étroite* (Mercure de France), p. 211.

¹³ *F.-M.*, p. 236.

Paludes succeeds in being at once *Paludes* and the *Journal de Paludes*, without, for all that, losing its organic unity. In the case of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, Gide finds himself obliged to publish the *Journal* separately, and forcibly wedge a digest of the latter into the framework of the novel proper. And here Hubert, the Philistine of *Paludes*, might well have had his revenge on the author by quoting back the latter's reproach:¹⁴

"N'aurais-tu rien compris, pauvre ami, aux raisons d'être d'un poème? . . . Un livre . . . mais un livre . . . est clos, plein, lisse comme un œuf. On n'y saurait faire entrer rien, pas une épingle que par force et sa forme en serait brisée."

The whole question of the artist's nature, so admirably contained within the text of *Paludes*, is the pin, or crowbar, which breaks the perfect mould of the later novel. This is perhaps explained by the fact that the author of *Paludes* is in the end as "enfermé", as humiliated before the universe as his fellows. It is true that, unlike the latter, he knows he is humiliated, a desperate prisoner, but this knowledge cannot alter anything nor save him from our human condition ("Que de fois, cherchant un peu d'air, suffocant, j'ai connu le geste d'ouvrir des fenêtres — et je me suis arrêté, sans espoir, parce qu'une fois, les ayant ouvertes . . .").¹⁵ And although he cries out again and again: "Ça m'est égal, parce que j'écris *Paludes*", this is more a consolation than a liberation. He admits to Hubert that "ici c'est bordé de talus comme ailleurs".¹⁶ But Edouard and the Gide of the *Journal* are proud and complacent in their sense of freedom; the despair of Armand, the self-conscious "imbécile" (in the full sense), is not their despair, and Edouard passes out of our ken triumphant at having won Olivier and smacking his lips at the prospect of Caloub. The ironic humility of the last sentences of *Paludes* is preferable.

The latter work may, in fact, be conceived as a satire, thirty years before the event, of the uncritical narcissism of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. The conversations with Roger Martin du Gard, the theorizings, the apologies *pro opere suo* have their ironic counterparts in the conversations, the readings of the rough draft to Hubert and Angèle; it is clear that the Gide of 1895 is fully conscious of the futility of such procedures. *Paludes* is indeed, among many other things, the satire of the artist who tries to explain his work to himself and others, and succeeds

¹⁴ *Paludes* (Gallimard), p. 79.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 187.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 80.

only in changing the nature of his work and realizing the absolute inadequacy of his own explanations. For as soon as the artist seeks to examine his own functioning, he distorts this functioning; the probing instrument destroys what is to be probed.

Thus he can never accurately define the respective rôles of volition and inspiration in his composition; on one hand he sees his activity as purely gratuitous (hence the blank page left in the *agenda*), on the other hand this very *agenda* frequently notes acts of pure volition in the composition of *Paludes*. ("Chercher des épithètes pour *fongosités*" – "Trouver l'équivalent du *nigra sed formosa* pour Angèle").¹⁷ This contradiction is even better exemplified in the passage of *Les Caves du Vatican*, where he elaborately portrays Anthime's wen.¹⁸ Here he is laughing at his inability to discipline himself, whilst at the same time implying that this more than sufficient description of the wen is quite deliberate. Yet originally the image of the wen suggested itself to him quite spontaneously¹⁹ (perhaps by an unconscious reminiscence of Balzac); in the course of composition he not only displaces it from the eye to the neck, but realizes that if he retains it, he betrays his principle which excludes the accidental from art, and that if he excises it, he betrays his other principle of the gratuitousness of art. Thus, when he writes: "ici malgré tout mon désir de ne relater que l'essentiel, je ne puis passer sous silence la loupe d'Anthime", he is at once yielding to his original impulse and making a deliberate choice.

In all this he knows he is mystifying the reader, but he knows he is himself mystified. The complex interaction of volition and impulse is so inextricable that no absolute definition is possible. Gide does indeed go on to imply in *Les Caves du Vatican* that in both aesthetics and ethics no absolute definitions are possible, that our language can never mirror accurately our universe. We are all indeed in the situation of Amédée, who goes forth to release the true pope and, with him, Truth itself, and who finally is lost in a vast palace of illusions, until he comes to doubt the very existence of the stones of Rome and his own presence among them.²⁰

Les Caves is certainly not a comforting book, as Claudel well saw, when he compared its "affreuse désolation" to *Candide*.²¹

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁸ pp. 18-19.

¹⁹ v. P. Lafille, *André Gide, romancier*, p. 76.

²⁰ *Les Caves*, p. 179.

²¹ *Correspondance de Paul Claudel et d'André Gide* (Gallimard), p. 234.

But like *Candide*, it is redeemed by its profound lesson of intellectual humility. One may well regret that Gide forgot his own lesson. A phrase of his dedicatory letter to Copeau is curiously prophetic: "Récits, soties, il m'apparaît que jusqu'ici je n'écrivis que des livres ironiques . . . dont sans doute voici le dernier."²² Alas! it was all too true, but Gide is nothing if not a critic, and it is for lack of the sustained irony of the "soties" that he comes to prefer himself as an individual to his own work. Like his Prometheus, he feels he has escaped the limitations of ordinary mortals, but Gide, who usually had so fine an appreciation of Greek myth, has here misread the lesson of the Aeschylean drama, and forgotten the cautionary tale of his own epilogue. Indeed one can say that, in preferring himself to his ideas, Gide has lost his savour and committed what he was so terrified of committing, "that sin against the Spirit which will not be forgiven". It may be that posterity will partially redeem him by cherishing his earlier works.

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²² Quoted by Lafille, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

EXPRESSIONIST INFLUENCES IN MARSMAN'S EARLY POETRY

In the last years some conflicting opinions have been stated as to the importance and extent of German expressionist influence on the poetry of H. Marsman, (1899-1940), one of the foremost Dutch poets and essayists of the period between the two world wars. Some find this influence only in his early poetry, others recognize traces of it throughout his whole work, others again deny this influence altogether. In an introduction to a recent anthology of modern Dutch poetry, Simon Vinkenoog claims that after Marsman had discovered the German expressionists, he tried for the rest of his life to free himself of their influence.¹ Contrasting with this view is the opinion of Roel Houwink, who maintains that "primarily there was no question of expressionist influence on Marsman," and who dismisses suggestions to this effect as literary myth-making.² Houwink continues by saying that what was taken for expressionist influence was, however, "autochthonous, i.e., had arisen from Marsman's own existential situations and had not come from elsewhere." Houwink apparently wants to regard the German expressionist poetry and Marsman's first poems as simultaneous, analogous phenomena, which developed independently of one another.

Although this is by no means an uncommon feature, either in the arts or in the sciences, there are indications which make it rather doubtful in this particular case. The viewpoints of Vinkenoog and Houwink are, of course, the extremes, and the discussion about Marsman's debt to expressionism usually moves between these two poles. Arthur Lehning, a close friend of Marsman and author of a recent book on him, also warns against an over-estimation of the influence of the expressionists. His argument is that Marsman, at the time he wrote his first poems, had not yet read the poets who would be of importance to him.³ Lehning does not specify whom he means by those poets, but we may assume that they include Stramm, Trakl and Heym, as they are the poets Marsman himself mentions most frequently. About the others we are in the dark, but it is not unlikely that

¹ Vinkenoog, Simon, *Atonaal* (2nd ed., The Hague, Stols, 1952), p. 7.

² Houwink, R. "Marsman en de generatie van Achttien," *Maatstaf*, II, 4, 5, (1954), 267.

³ Lehning, Arthur, *De Vriend van mijn Jeugd* (The Hague, Van Hoeve, 1954), p. 40.

Marsman knew of the poetry of Kurt Heynicke and Hermann Kasack in 1919-20 — the years of his first poems.⁴ Lehning mentions an article of Marsman's, written in 1921 on these two poets, and he also presumes that Marsman was previously acquainted with Herwarth Walden's periodical *Der Sturm*, which was established in 1910.⁵ One must, of course, be careful not to be led by these facts to a rash acceptance of early expressionist influence, but it is also clear that they do not conclusively remove the possibility of this influence.

In connection with expressionism in Dutch literature, two other names come immediately to mind, viz. Paul van Ostaïjen and Herman van den Bergh. Van Ostaïjen's poetry, developing the expressionist ideas in an entirely personal way, is too complex to be characterized in a few words; it suffices to say that the nature of it is too foreign to Marsman for there to be a profound influence. Van den Bergh, on the other hand, exercised a very strong influence on the young Marsman. Van den Bergh's volume *De Boog* appeared in 1917, and Marsman bought it immediately and read it "with enraptured veneration."⁶ The publication of these poems marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Dutch poetry and young poets like Marsman seem to have sensed the importance of it almost at once. Lehning mentions several striking parallels in the poems of Van den Bergh and Marsman, such as their similar use of colours, the frequency of words like "fire" and a symbol like "flag", and, above all, the new feeling of "cosmic consciousness".⁷ This last element was new to Dutch poetry and is clearly expressed in the following poem:

HEERSCHER

Hij schreed
en ruimte was hem soepel kleed
aan 't koele lijf.

de gladde luchten spatten uit elkander
en roode sterren walmden ál hun wonder
in wankelenden nacht.

⁴ i.e. the first poems which he included in his *Collected Poems*; Marsman began to write in 1916, but discarded much of his early work.

⁵ *op. cit.*, p. 180.

⁶ *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁷ *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

hij schreed
 en ruimte brak aan zijn metalen tred
 en lucht verkromp voor zijn doorzengden zucht.

leven was enkle vlokken violette geur.

hij at
 en aarde trok haar gillende spiralen
 door schrompelenden nacht:
 hij had geproefd.

hij stond,
 atoom en kosmos beide,
 en heerschend was in ertsen greep
 over den werveldans der elementen
 d'ivoren glimlach van den stillen knaap.

For almost each line of this poem one can quote parallels in either Van den Bergh or the German expressionists. The verbal framework of the poem (*hij schreed*, *hij at*, *hij stond*) has its parallel in Van den Bergh's poem *De Vlam* (*hij zag*, *hij ging*), the phrase: ". . . en ruimte brak aan zijn metalen tred" is found almost identically in *De Vlam*: ". . . en strakte zijn naakt, waaraan de ruimte brak", while also Marsman's peculiar use of the word "vlokken" (flakes) occurs in Van den Bergh's poem: ". . . scheen 't of de ziel der aarde in roode vlokken dreef." For the line: "en ruimte was hem soepel kleed aan 't koele lijf" we find a parallel in a poem of Hermann Kasack: "Um mich der Raum flieszt schwer in hilflosen Falten". (*Junge Liebe*, 1921). "De gladde luchten spatten uit elkander" is reminiscent of another poem of Kasack's: "Höher rollte die Sonne, sie sprengte den Raum." (*Spur im Sand*, 1921), or of Stramm's "Der Raum zersprengt die Räume." (*Dämmerung*). The synaesthetic combination "vlokken violette geur" reminds us of a similar expression in a poem of Heym's, where the same colour is also used: "ein lila Hauch" (*Die Schläfer*), and in the same poem: "ein Ton vom kranken Violett".

I do not suggest that these instances are direct imitations of the German poets under discussion, but it seems obvious that Marsman was well acquainted with their way of expression. Examples like these may be striking enough: what is actually more important is the tone, the vision of this poem. In this and other early poems of Marsman's, the poet not only feels himself part of the universe, but he often presents himself as the dominator, the ruler of the cosmos. This "cosmic vision", with the pas-

sionate and explosive way in which it is expressed, is characteristic of both Van den Bergh and Marsman. It was new in Holland, and one turns immediately to the German expressionists to find the source, bearing in mind that there is "etwas Herrscherliches . . . in den Werken der meisten Expressionisten, eine dynamische Kraft, die sich ausströmen und sich der Umwelt bemächtigen will."⁸ When Marsman himself in later years took stock of expressionism, he also mentioned as its most important feature, that it "again made man the centre of the universe."⁹ Yet one cannot say that this cosmic vision is a general characteristic of the German expressionists. We find it in only very few, and there are even poets who hold exactly the opposite view: man is not the dominator of the universe, but:

"Eingepreszt von Himmel und Erde,
Zwischen die Steine der Unerbittlichkeit,
Wandelt der Mensch . . ."
(Hanns Johst, *Lieder der Sehnsucht*)

We must not forget, however, that the German expressionists formed by no means a homogeneous movement, but that they consisted of several groups, whose ideas sometimes clashed.¹⁰ And although we find this cosmic view in only a few poets, and although it is absent in some of the foremost expressionists such as Trakl and Heym, we are certainly justified in calling it expressionist. Two poets who wrote in this style were the above-mentioned Walden and Kasack, and it seems not unlikely that Van den Bergh and Marsman owe their cosmic vision to them. A third poet who wrote occasionally in this style was Heynicke, but it must be said that his vision was always more limited than that of the others.

On the whole we can say that Van den Bergh and Marsman intensified this vision and that their "hubris" is bolder and more grandiose than Walden's, Kasack's or Heynicke's. It is difficult to say whether Marsman was influenced by the German expressionists in a direct way, or through the intermediary of Van den Bergh. On the one hand we know that Marsman knew Van den Bergh's poetry as early as 1917, on the other hand he

⁸ Stuyver, W., *Deutsche expressionistische Dichtung im Lichte der Philosophie der Gegenwart* (Amsterdam, Paris, 1939), p. 185.

⁹ Marsman, H. *Verzameld Werk* (Amsterdam, Querido, 1947), iii, 202.

¹⁰ Samuel, R. H. and Hinton Thomas, R., *Expressionism in German life, literature and the theatre* (Cambridge, Heffer, 1939), pp. 13-14.

may have known *Der Sturm* before 1920, and he makes mention of Heynicke in a letter written in 1920, (annoyed that he cannot buy his work in Utrecht).¹¹ As *Heerscher* was written in 1919 or 1920, (published for the first time in January 1921), it is certainly not impossible that there was a direct influence by the German expressionists.

There was very little personal contact between Marsman and the German poets of that period. Marsman went to Germany for the first time in June, 1921, and by that time expressionism had passed its peak. One gets the impression, however, that Marsman did not quite realize this when he went to Germany. For in an autobiographical story, *Zelfportret van J. F.*, set in Berlin in 1921, he says: "I could go and live in Berlin and make contact with the young expressionists".¹² This wish seems a little anachronistic, as several of the foremost expressionist poets had died years before: Heym in 1912, Trakl, Lichtenstein and Lotz in 1914, Stramm in 1915. Marsman used his journey to Germany only as a setting for the story, and, contrary to what one would expect, he gave no details of what and whom he found in Berlin. Lehning informs us that Marsman spent a week there and that he met Kasack. Kasack, Lehning adds, was one of the few poets of the "man-and-idea-expressionism" whom Marsman could appreciate.¹³ We know of only one other poet whom he met, namely Herwarth Walden, to whose gallery "Der Sturm" he paid a visit. After he left Berlin, he travelled around Germany for several weeks. This trip inspired him to the writing of a series of poems, all clearly belonging together and describing various German and Dutch cities which he visited. These poems form a special section in his *Collected Poems*, and were originally grouped together under the title *Seinen* (Signals). At a first glance they seem purely expressionist poems:

Weimar

Doodenhuis

hooge vensters droomen hun vergaan

luikenkruis

vleermuisschaduw

daaraan

¹¹ Lehning, A., *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹² Marsman, H., *Verzameld Werk* (Amsterdam, Querido, 1947), ii, 183

¹³ Lenning, A., *op. cit.*, p. 55.

To this group belong: *Stralsund*, *Hiddensee*, *Fort*, *Bazel*, *Amsterdam*, *Potsdam*, *Weimar*, *Delft*, *Val* and a few others which he did not include in the *Collected Poems*. This group of poems is usually considered as the most evident example of Marsman's expressionism.¹⁴ Here one recognizes the influence of Stramm, although only so far as the outward appearance of the poems is concerned; Houwink was right when he wrote that when comparing Marsman and Stramm, one cannot speak of "the same world" (loc. cit.). Neither Stramm, nor any of the other German expressionist poets has written this kind of city-portrait. For although the form and the choice of words of these poems reminds us immediately of some of the German expressionists, the sphere of thought from which they arose rather seems to be contrary to the expressionist idea. The expressionists abstracted, and often wrote about "die Stadt" or "Städte", "der Baum", "der Mensch", etc., and not about one individual city.¹⁵ Becher's well-known poem *Berlin* may seem a notable exception, but on closer examination it appears that this poem could refer to any big city, and that Becher, instead of describing Berlin in particular, gives the characteristics of "the city" in general.¹⁶ Marsman, on the other hand, does not abstract; he tries to capture the atmosphere of the various cities and the momentary impression they make on him. In poems like these only the idiom is expressionist, the vision is closer to impressionism.

When he wrote these poems Marsman was a great admirer of Stramm's poetry and read him extensively. But as in the case of Kasack and Heynicke, this admiration was not permanent and gradually faded. At last only Trakl and Heym were left to him of the group of expressionists from whom he expected so much. In an essay, *Ten years after Menschheitsdämmerung* (1929),¹⁷ he comes to the conclusion that the achievements of expressionism and its "creative potentiality" are slight. With

¹⁴ "De stedenverzen en de enkele gedichten die daarbij horen vormen in Marsmans eerste bundel het beste voorbeeld van zijn expressionisme, ja, de dichter Nijhoff heeft bij een herdenking in 1940 ze met de gedichten van Van Ostaïjen het beste expressionisme genoemd in de Nederlandse poëzie." Brandt Corstius, J. C., *De dichter Marsman en zijn kring* (The Hague, G. B. van Goor, 1951), p. 41.

¹⁵ See for examples of this the first section of Kurt Pinthus' anthology *Menschheitsdämmerung* (Sturz und Schrei) (Berlin, Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1920).

¹⁶ Pinthus, K., *op. cit.*, p. 7-9.

¹⁷ Marsman, H., *Verzameld Werk*, iii, 257-262.

one catching phrase he pronounces sentence on expressionism: "Poetry is not dynamite, but diamond." From this verdict, however, he excludes Trakl and Heym, and "a few poems by a few others." Of these two, Heym seems to have exercised less influence. And indeed, when reading Heym, one cannot help feeling that Marsman's admiration for him must have been rather "at a distance". Marsman probably recognized Heym as a genuine poet, without feeling any real relationship with him. Heym's macabre poetry, with its gruesome details of death and decomposition, is, in fact, entirely foreign to the spirit of Marsman's enthusiastic and virile poetry. Much the same can be said for the relationship between Marsman and Trakl. Trakl's pre-occupation with doom and destruction (*Verfall* and *Verwesung* are key-words in his work) is also diametrically opposed to Marsman's conception of life, for which he himself accepted the term "vitalism". But Trakl, being a subtler and more imaginative poet, made a greater impression on Marsman than Heym could ever make, and it is therefore not surprising that we find in Marsman's work more reminiscences of Trakl than of Heym. Again, the influence of Trakl on Marsman has not been very profound; the similarities which strike us are no more than isolated instances. Trakl's influence remained on the surface and never really entered into Marsman's sphere of thought.

Still, there are a few elements to be noted of which Trakl may have been the origin. Typical of the construction of a number of poems of both Trakl and Marsman is their beginning with a few words which indicate the situation, e.g. "Braune Kastanien. Leise gleiten die alten Leute . . ." (*Winkel am Wald*), and Marsman: "Schuimende morgen. En mijn vuren lach drinkt uit ontzagelijke schalen . . ." (*Vlam*). Then there is a curious use of the interjection O!, which I have not come across in other Dutch or German poets of that period. Both Trakl and Marsman do not use it in the usual way, as an evocation, but more as a pure exclamation: "O! die Flöte des Lichts" (*Verwandlung des Bösen*), and Marsman: "O! de sneeuwstorm van uw gouden mantel" (*De vrouw van de zon*). Also the use of the colours blue and green is practically identical in both poets. The frequent occurrence of angels and deer may be a coincidence: more significant is the fact that we find the idea of the lost paradise in Marsman's poetry as well as in Trakl's. For a clear understanding of the relationship between the two, however, it is as important to know that elements which are regarded as being characteristic of Mars-

man's poetry are absent in Trakl's, and vice versa. In Trakl we find nothing of the "hubris" of Marsman's early work, nothing of the feeling of being the ruler and dominator. Also, Trakl never had the vividness and fierceness of Marsman's style. In his earlier poems his choice of words is almost conventionally romantic; in his later poetry the tone is more poignant, but never as vehement as Marsman's.

It is true that Marsman has also written a few poems the theme of which is destruction and decomposition e.g. *Ontbinding* and *De Wijnpers*. The former of these, with its worms, maggots and other vermin, is reminiscent of Heym, whereas the second expresses the idea so prevalent in Trakl's poetry of destruction already present in what is now young and beautiful. It is possible that these poems have been inspired directly by Trakl and Heym. The fact that, in vision, they are not representative of Marsman's work and stand apart from his other death poetry, seems to widen the possibility of influence.

Finally there is one other thing I should like to mention in connection with the relationship of Marsman to Trakl. Marsman's poem *Val*, which is grouped together with the city-poems, bears the following motto:

Ich falle nach Venedig hinunter
und so weiter—bis zu den Sternen.

Trakl.

In the letter to Lehning, who was preparing the publication of Marsman's first volume, he asked him to make sure whether he had placed this "beautiful quotation from Trakl" above his poem.¹⁸ In Trakl's poetry, however, one looks in vain for these lines. They are not part of a poem, but are a slightly altered version of a letter which Trakl wrote to his friend Erhard Buschbeck in 1913. Trakl was at that time living in Vienna, where he felt miserable, and was very much looking forward to a trip to Venice. This trip he announced to Buschbeck in the following way:

Wien, Weinstube St. Urbani-Keller.
Lieber! Die Welt ist rund. Am Samstag falle ich
nach Venedig hinunter. Immer weiter—zu den Sternen.
Dein G. T.

The letter was published in a book: *Erinnerung an Georg Trakl*,

¹⁸ This letter was written in 1922 and is quoted by Lehning, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

which appeared in 1926. As *Val* was written as early as 1922, one wonders how Marsman had become acquainted with these lines, which he almost certainly took for a quotation from Trakl's poetry. The solution of this question might throw some more light on the relationship between the two poets.

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EUGÈNE LE ROY AND PÉRIGORD

Périgord is a land of many contrasts under its mild southern sun. Viewed from vantage points like Domme or the Château of Beynac, it presents a green and lovely perspective of winding river valley buttressed with cliffs and lined with poplars. Approached from Limoges, it appears heavily wooded with oak, chestnut and beech, with dense undergrowth and few tracks. Its three or four lesser rivers flow through irregular country to join the majestic Dordogne. Beneath its soil are prehistoric marvels like Les Eyzies and the Grottes de Lascaux, while towns like Périgueux, Sarlat, Monpazier bear memorable testimony to more recent history. Its thousand odd castles testify likewise to the insecurity of this frontier reach between English possessions and French in the Hundred Years' War – an insecurity renewed in the sixteenth century during the wars of religion. More recent wars have troubled it less: the quiet rhythms of its life, its relative isolation from the main tourist channels, its links with past tradition and its richly varied landscape give this region of France an identity all its own, a "personality".

It is rather refreshing to find this personality incarnate in a man who lived, moved and had his being in Périgord, who, except for military service, and a brief sojourn in Paris and Bordeaux, hardly left his native province in a lifetime of seventy-one years. An authentic countryman, Eugène Le Roy, who at the age of 59 found himself famous, refused all solicitations that came to him from Paris, from publishers and contemporary writers: until his retirement in 1902, he carried on tranquilly with his administrative duties as a collector of taxes, and with characteristic modesty refused to see in his published work anything but a village chronicle of local events. His salary as a civil servant left him no margin for printing his work himself, and his writings rested more or less on his shelves at Hautefort, unhonoured and unsung, until the astonishing hazard of 1891.¹ A senator, kept waiting for a train in a small provincial station, bought a local paper to pass the time and read the current serial, *Le moulin du Frau*: greatly intrigued, he searched for the other "instalments" and read the work through, with growing enthusiasm. He was able, after brief inquiries, to track down the author and to visit him, and took with him to Paris the

¹ v. Gaston Guillaumie, *Eugène Le Roy* (Bordeaux, 1929), pp. 7-9.

manuscript of the novel which had made such an impression on him. It appeared in print in 1895, and another novel, *Jacquou le Croquant*, which took the literary world by storm, in 1900. Yet the author remained a real Cincinnatus, unmoved by this turn of the wheel, and with no illusions as to the permanence of the fame which had so astonishingly descended upon him.

The man thus abruptly brought before a Parisian public which was wearying of Barrès and Anatole France and the Dreyfus Affair was a man born during the monarchy of July, to humble parents who were in the service of a nobleman at Hautefort. This was a time when large families, and the exodus of rural labour towards urban industries, aggravated by natural calamities like those of 1846 and 1847, made for acute poverty among the French peasantry. Le Roy was a commoner, very closely in touch with the common folk: his novels show in every detail a most intimate acquaintance with life reduced to its barest essentials. Jacquou's first home at Combenègre, and the sorry hovel at the forest tile-kiln, are enough to suggest that 1789 had never occurred. Le Roy's modest origins, his early apprenticeship to poverty and hunger, filled him all his life with an acute sense of the injustice of social privilege based on birth or wealth: they made him, later, a rebel and a republican. Education, in these early days, was a luxury more or less confined to the middle classes; but he did attend some sort of school, including a Catholic college, until his fourteenth year. After four years of minor business positions, he enlisted in the cavalry, served in Africa and in Italy, and was finally discharged in 1860. His administrative career, quite an undistinguished one, had commenced: his literary "career" was a leisure-time distraction whose rewards were still thirty-five years ahead.

His novels are discreetly, but adequately, autobiographical: they sketch in for us his disappointment in love, his subsequent happy marriage, as well as his years of boyhood. The circumstance which seems to have accelerated his writing habit was his appointment, about 1886, to a position at Bordeaux—sufficiently far from his own native province to be "exile" for him, and to induce nostalgia. The rest of his life history is simply the record of his sensational, but brief renown, up to the time of his death in 1907. He refused to court academic laurels at the hands of the Académie Française; he refused the Legion of Honour decoration in 1905. His declining years were darkened by the unexpected death of his eldest son during his medical studies:

his inspiration in this as in other adversities was the Stoical wisdom of the ancients, not that of the Church. He died in 1907 and was buried in Montignac.

There is an extraordinary freshness, vigour and directness in all that he wrote. Here was a man who deliberately elected to confine his observation to his own little tract of earth. Paris is never more than a distant threat, and his utmost concession to urban life is to tread occasionally the historic streets of Périgueux (usually in connection with civil or criminal proceedings). His writing has the pictorial value of a medieval Book of Hours: in it the sower goes forth to sow, the shepherdess tends her sheep, the miller grinds the corn, the peasant gathers in the grape-harvest—yet all this without the least straining after local colour or “effect”. They are simply part and parcel of the familiar rural year, observed by a man who sees such events, not as exotic survivals calculated to stimulate a jaded tourist taste, but as simple, everyday reality—as unstudied as the daily doings of *Cranford* or of Mary Webb’s *Shropshire*. The folk of Périgord are for the author not “they” but “we”: his two most characteristic novels, *Le moulin du Frau* and *Jacquou le Croquant*, are both written in the first person. Events such as military service, revolution, war, discriminatory taxation, are all extraneous, imposed from without: the author sees them, not from any eagle’s eyrie of scholarship, but *locally*, as they impinge on the countryman’s daily life, upon “us”.

The old peasant forms of speech are therefore legitimate on his pen. Such turns of phrase as *espère-moi*, *d’abord qu’elle nous vit*, *dans le commencement qu’il était*, the use of *drole* for “child”, *jointer* (to meet) *cafourche* (for *carrefour*), *dététiner* (to wean), *métives* (harvest) the diminutives *petiote*, *enfançon*, *lapereau*, *bouchette*, even *porc singlar* (for *sanglier*), have an authentic savour that George Sand had striven in vain to achieve. They are convincing, because the rest of the picture is convincing. They go along with such local customs as cock-stoning, whip-cracking competitions among the millers, rites for the dying performed by a village sorcerer, the rather salacious “initiations” visited upon newlyweds, the festival of St. Rémy at Auriac, the wrestling bouts at Périgueux and countless other details intrinsic to daily life in these parts. So, too, Le Roy moves expertly among the growing things of his native province—not only crops and vines, but herbs and forest-trees, wild flowers and fruits—and of course truffles! Beasts and birds he knows as

well – wolves and boars, hedgehogs and hares and foxes – as well as the lore of woodsman, fisherman and hunter. All of this might be suspect, but for the perfect naturalness with which it fits into place in his canvas. And it is a knowledge which far transcends the sort of “tourist” documentation which a non-autochthonous writer may achieve.

This sort of material, be it said, is only ancillary: a regional novelist fails of his aim if his *human* creations fail to carry conviction as well as their natural setting. Here, however, Le Roy is on sure ground: his daily contact with all sorts and conditions of men furnished him with a portrait gallery of amazing variety and richness. Alongside his stoical, chivalrous *ennemi de la mort*, Daniel Charbonnière, and the lecherous, cynical blood-letter, M. Rudel, there is the village bone-setter Labrugère, once of noble stock but content to be once more of peasant stature. There are the village “dominies” – M. Lamothe, who preferred quills to steel nibs (and hunting to teaching!), the staunch republican M. Malaroche and his fanatically devout successor. There are the men of law – strangely benign, these, and generous: M. Vidal-Fongrave, the barrister who defends Jacquou’s father and provides for the wife, and the loyal, genial notary, M. Cherrier of St. Vincent. M. Masfrangeas, of Périgueux, is a lovable gourmet and a staunch friend of the miller, Sicaire Nogaret. The churchmen are quite a study: Father Barnabas and M. Pinot are ecclesiastics rather after the *Clochemerle* pattern, whereas M. Vignolle is a dour *parvenu* with exaggerated notions as to his priestly importance in the cosmos. The best of them all is Jacquou’s friend and protector, M. Bonal, a real father to his flock, kindly like Goldsmith’s village preacher, and generous to a fault.

“Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.”

For such a republican and anticlerical as Le Roy to have created such a character is rather a tribute to his honesty and humanity. Then there is the vigorous little tailor Lajarthé, a democrat and an iconoclast: there are the devoted servants La Mondine and La Grande, the jovial country squires M. de Fersac and the Chevalier de Galibert, the contumelious noblemen M. de Nansac and M. Silain, and a whole host of toiling peasants and charcoal-burners besides. It is the sort of world which could be evoked only by a countryman who was constantly in it and of it, daily

sharing its varied life in tavern and market square, in mill and farm.

There is the didactic note as well, fairly prominent in the first two of Le Roy's novels: he was quite persuaded that the rural life, with its quiet rhythms, its daily contact with the good earth, its simplicity and freedom, was the only normal, healthy life for a human being. As he wrote in *Le moulin du Frau* (p. 263):

On n'a pas d'idée du plaisir que nous avons, nous autres paysans, de voir naître, croître et mûrir le grain que nous avons semé; d'enfoncer nos sabots dans la terre que nous avons tant de fois retournée avec l'araire; de suivre le champ que nous connaissons sillon par sillon . . . pour le paysan, c'est comme un vrai mariage entre la terre et lui. . . .

And Jacquou says of his ploughing and reaping days (p. 213):

Cette vie étroitement attachée à la terre me convenait; j'aimais à pousser mes bons bœufs limousins dans le champ que déchirait l'araire, enfonçant mes sabots dans la terre fraîche . . . Ça me faisait du bien d'employer ma force, et quand le matin, ayant fauché un journal de pré, je voyais l'herbe humide de rosée, coupée régulièrement et bien ras, j'étais content. . . .

This type of experience is fairly fundamental, and familiar even to the tiller of a suburban allotment: Le Roy constantly shows that to his mind it was the highway to basic health and sanity. And the speech-forms and rhythms of the popular ballad style, in which his "tales of a grandfather" were not infrequently couched, lent themselves naturally to the arguments of a fireside homily, though this was only incidental to the telling of a story. The peasant, after all, was the best evidence of peasant values.

This conviction of the merit of rural life was reinforced by Le Roy's keen sense of social injustice. Despite the transfer of property effected by the Revolution of 1789, many a peasant still did not own the land he tilled, and extortions and evictions seemed to show that the last state of agricultural France was worse than the first. *Le moulin du Frau* cites a glaring sample of injustice, Monsieur Silain's expulsion of his share-farmers after many years of tenure, but there are others too—the arbitrary arrest of the miller Nogaret, the exploitation of the foundling Nancy by her foster-parent, and petty persecutions by mayor or village teacher, all of them proof of the corruptions of power. These jarring notes in what is otherwise a simple and

sincere rural tale were a prelude to the harsher and angrier music that broke out in *Jacquou le Croquant*, the peasant epic whose hero grew up to be, not only the embodiment of his native province, but the last incarnation of the *jacquerie*, of peasant dignity and independence outraged by feudal tyranny. The historical setting of the story – the reactionary Restoration period (1815-1830) – enhanced this merely local, yet universal, war between despotism and destitution, and enhanced also the stature of this woodsman, whom birth and circumstance had left quite propertyless, equipped only with his native wit and bodily strength. Apart from the brief idyll of his sojourn with the village priest, and the tranquil epilogue that succeeded his trial, Jacquou's whole existence was one of unaided struggle. However mellow the retrospect of his declining years, his characteristic environment was tragic conflict, and his daily bread the hard crust of grinding poverty. His long vendetta with the hated exploiter *did* issue in victory, but his casualties were his father and mother and sweetheart: he stormed his Bastille and expelled the oppressor, but life left him deeply scarred, and the andante of his old age was a very sober one. It is characteristic of Le Roy (and it sets him in contrast with George Sand) that his hero's struggle was rewarded, not with unforeseen wealth, but with continued toil (unenhanced by dramatic episode) and with the barest sufficiency of food and raiment. Fiction did not need to be stranger than reality. Local history could well remain local, and Jacquou, having vindicated his elementary human right to independence and freedom, and to the ordinary fulfilments of a man's life, could well sink back, his work done, into the untheatrical anonymity of his kind.

His setting is Périgord before the Industrial Revolution – the Périgord Noir of the forest reaches, with scattered villages and farms, an unresponsive soil, primitive means of communication, and a local life scarcely altered by centuries of social change. In this backward region a hierarchical structure of society still obtains: a nobility often of too recent provenance to be authentically patrician, a prosperous, property-minded middle class, a certain proportion of successful peasant farmers – and after that the nameless hordes of the poor, woodsmen and labourers with no economic security whatever. Food and clothing are of the most primitive – chestnuts, maize flour, potatoes, and such flesh and fowl as can be procured by poaching. Superstition and spells persist among a peasantry where literacy is rare, and popular

tradition attaches evil portent to particular times and places. Religion is crude, with many quaint idolatries, some miracle-mongering, and clerical lapses into covetousness and lust. Yet season by season, festivity by festivity, the traditional peasant lives out his traditional year, labouring with his fellows at harvesting grapes or nuts or corn, telling the tales and singing the songs of his fathers before him, and ready on occasion to take arms against his sea of troubles. It is a superbly timeless evocation, and not vitiated either by the unreality of the pastoral or the over-gross reality of the school of Zola. Jacquou is the incarnation of his native province, tough, rugged and independent.

Both *Le moulin du Frau* and *Jacquou le Croquant* show Le Roy as an intransigent republican—an apostle of the eighteenth century philosophers, a devotee of nature and reason. There is something quaintly archaic, rather puristic about his political faith (especially at a time when the Third Republic seemed utterly safe after its triumphs over Monarchy, Empire, Church and Army): it recalls the old-fashioned republicanism of the Orleans teachers who shaped the boyhood of Péguy. It was a warm faith far removed from the property-fixation of the bourgeoisie and peasantry—a faith made up of real ethical values, justice, freedom, equality, with a genuine human sympathy for the poor and needy, the downtrodden and oppressed. It was the faith of Lamartine and of the 1848 insurgents, the faith of the patriot armies which flung back the invaders at Valmy in 1792—a warmer faith than deism or positivism, and more human. It was all part and parcel of Le Roy's sincerity and integrity, and closely knit with a patriotism which brought him, not as a conscript, but as a volunteer, into the 1870 war. It shows once again how much, yet how discreetly, this countryman was himself the matter and source of what he penned.

These earlier novels are really more integrally regional than the remainder of Le Roy's work, in which his sense of social justice found expression more and more in the novel of manners, though the setting and characters are still those of Périgord. His two novelettes of 1900, *Nicette* and *Milou*, both profoundly tragic, address themselves to the problem of the foundling child, and they are, like George Sand's *François le champi* and *La petite Fadette*, as it were the male and female side of the one picture. The male inflicts, the female accepts, suffering. Both stories are soberly told, in a patriarchal style not entirely free

from some over-use of archaic speech, and both are very close to the soil, to the scents and sounds and doings of daily peasant routine. Their rustic simplicity brings them close to the work of George Sand, their humanity and pity close to that of Dostoevsky. The setting is the rocky, waterless plateau just south of Hautefort, the country that Le Roy knew so intimately, and in each story tragedy stems from the original sin against society – the abandonment of the new-born child and its exposure from early years to hunger, poverty and exploitation. The fact that Nicette finds an affectionate foster-mother, whereas Milou is left to struggle more or less unaided in an environment of petty crime, is of little ultimate importance, since each child is, socially speaking, unprotected, justice not being the apanage of the very poor. The same lesson is driven home in *La Gent Agrafeil*, one of the four stories of *Au pays des pierres*, where the victim of injustice finds God's vengeance too slow and takes action himself. This, and the tragic story of passion *La belle couturière*, a fine study of life in the fortress-township of Domme, are both in the minor key: *Roquejoffre* and *Dom Gérémus*, rather quizzical in manner, are a return to the republican tradition and even to republican times – those of the First Republic – and constitute, rather than a regional "documentary", a satire on the first and second Estates. The satirical vein persists, relieved by a love idyll, but violent and merciless, in *Les gens d'Auberoque* (1906), which is "Flaubert", not "George Sand" in treatment.

The two later novels, *Mademoiselle de la Ralphie* and *L'ennemi de la mort*, are even more sombre. The former, with its frustrations based on rank, and its violent culmination in madness and death, appeared one year before the author's death: apart from a few early chapters, it lies outside the range of the regional novel. The other, a posthumous work, whose subject-matter is not unlike that of Balzac's *Médecin de campagne*, nor setting unlike that of *Le curé de village*, uses the same slight recession in time as the other works, and achieves an extraordinary unity of interest, like some of the later regional novels, by its grim concentration on one central character. This one character, moreover, the doctor Daniel Charbonnière, living in peasant fashion and among peasants, has consecrated his life (and his purse) to the regeneration, both medical and social, of the pestilential marshy tract of Périgord called *La Double*. Against vested economic interests, clerical intolerance and peasant leth-

argy this extraordinary Stoic wages a completely unselfish battle. Unmoved under persecution, he maintains a Job-like moral integrity, but not in the name of theistic values. The ultimate opprobrium, almost execration, that surrounds him, the loss of wife, children and estate, his lonely death, unloved and unmarked, seem to indicate a very sombre twilight in the author's own life and convictions, but an unalterable faith in the moral law and an abiding affection, however disillusioned, for erring humanity. Its regional value is incidental rather than central, but it is there all the same, and continues the strain of the two earlier novels of the peasant tradition.

As the spokesman for Périgord, Eugène Le Roy obviously has rare qualities. To a close and intimate knowledge of his own countryside, of its fauna and flora, of its climate and economy, he has added the knowledge of the chronicler-historian, won by ceaseless scrutiny of public or private archives and of Périgord's historical record in stone. Yet he has avoided falling into the heaviness and pedantry that are the chronic temptation of the historical novelist, and his documentation is of a vivid, imaginative type, in which history becomes alive. His work is, of course, more imaginative than historical, but has the authenticity of historical data whether written or oral, partly because of the author's native sincerity, partly because some of his historical settings fall within his own lifetime and experience. That is not to say that he does not "improve on" his originals: his peasant heroes certainly have more "stuff" to them than George Sand's, more vigour and less sentimentality, but they are just as much the mouthpieces of their creator's pet theories—in this case, republican and anti-clerical theories—and just as much simplified down to three or four basic urges such as love, family loyalty, fortitude under adversity and neighbourliness. The over-all effect of his work, however, is convincing, and there is no disharmony between the man and the writings—he *lived* the values he describes. It is rare in regional literature to find such unsimulated integration.

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GIBBON MISREAD

Few literary cases go to the full court of critical opinion, and even of an author as famous as Gibbon some indefensible statements remain current. I shall examine one such statement, made in slightly different forms by two scholars, both of whom suppose that for Gibbon the Antonine Age (A.D. 96-180) was the peak of human progress.

According to Leslie Stephen,¹ Gibbon's "ideal state of society was the deathlike trance of an enlightened despotism." Stephen's sheet anchor is a famous passage in Chap. iii of the *Decline and Fall*, where Gibbon appropriates and remoulds a recent pronouncement by the eminent Dr Robertson.² What Stephen thinks fit to quote is as follows:

"If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the direction [guidance] of virtue and wisdom."

He failed, perhaps, to reread the rest of the paragraph:

"The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors, whose character and authority commanded involuntary respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully preserved by Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honour of restoring the republic had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom."

The first half of the paragraph falls short of Stephen's contention; the last sentence rebuts it; and there are other indications that should not have escaped any reader of Gibbon—notably the word "image", which is often linked in these opening

¹ *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 1876, vol. i, pp. 447-8.

² To his *History of Charles V* (1769) Robertson prefixed "A View of the Progress of Society in Europe, from the Subversion of the Roman Empire to the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century." In par. 12 he writes: "If a man were called to fix upon the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most calamitous and afflicted, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Theodosius the Great, to the establishment of the Lombards in Italy."

chapters with the main theme of deceptive constitutional forms. Only six or seven pages back Gibbon has said of Augustus: "He wished to deceive the people by an image of civil liberty, and the armies by an image of civil government."

In our own day, Arnold Toynbee³ has stalked with far more pomp and circumstance into much the same ditch. His main thesis—that Gibbon's story starts too late to reveal the deeper causes of decline—is one which Gibbon has partly admitted⁴ and on which I have nothing to say. But Toynbee goes much further. He holds that Gibbon was not even aware of the debility and precarious tenure of the Antonine Empire, and enforces this view with an eloquent simile. He recalls driving through the Connecticut Valley with a New England friend. Mile after mile of woodland lay under a warm sky, each leaf intact in a splendour of crimson or pure gold; to Toynbee the countryside spoke peace and summer security; but to his more experienced friend this Indian Summer meant hard weather near at hand. Gibbon, says Toynbee, was under an illusion similar to his own: he saw the Antonine Age as high summer, whereas the modern historian must see it as an "Indian Summer" whose beauty tells of long decay and impending dissolution:

"Thanks to a wider knowledge and a deeper insight that do not spring from any merits of his own, the twentieth-century historian can perhaps read more clearly than the greatest of his eighteenth-century predecessors the signs of the times on the impressive face of that magnificent Antonine landscape. As the New Englander, when confronted once more in due season with the autumn colours of the Connecticut Valley, was insensible to all the impressions of an English stranger because his native eyes well knew these intimations of Mortality for what they were, so the twentieth-century Western observer of a second-century Hellenic landscape will not allow himself to be captivated by the hallucination of an eighteenth-century man of letters."

How easily a man succumbs to his own prose-poetry! According to Toynbee, Gibbon suffered from an hallucination that the Antonine Empire was sound and built to last. Yet even eighteenth-century men of letters knew very well that it had in fact collapsed; its collapse was indeed Gibbon's theme, and can

³ *A Study of History*, vol. iv, 1939, pp. 56-63.

⁴ See note in Bury's ed. of *Decline and Fall*, vol. i. p. 508.

scarcely have come to him as an inexplicable surprise. Robertson had recently written that "there were defects in the Roman government, even in its most perfect form, which threatened its dissolution".⁵ One would expect Gibbon to have at least an inkling that the Antonine Age was, in Toynbee's words, "'the Indian Summer', whose brief splendour celebrates, not the Promethean *élan* of Life, but the inexorable onset of Mortality."

This is, in fact, precisely the impression that Gibbon's account of the Empire in the first three chapters of the *Decline and Fall* is designed to give. But Gibbon was an artist as well as an historian – a fact that may have had something to do with his choice of a starting-point – and to a great master of broad effects the splendour of the Antonine Age must have seemed the perfect background for the third-century dissolution. This, at any rate, is how Gibbon has used it; and "his incomparable opening passage" (Toynbee's phrase) makes such a superb picture that some readers seem to have missed the historian's comment on it. Gibbon's business is twofold. He must make the most of the splendour, the prosperity, the power, of the second-century Empire: but at the same time (and without weakening the dominant impression) he must indicate its infirmity. To this end, each chapter is carefully moulded.

The first describes the extent and military force of the Empire. Vast territories and armies are always impressive – not least when Gibbon describes them – but what Gibbon emphasizes from the first is the Augustan policy of territorial retrenchment, and he enforces the impression of spent vigour with subtle indirection. In an apparent digression of nearly two pages, he describes the one conquest of the First Century, that of Britain. Forty years of warfare pass in a few phrases: Agricola wins a decisive victory, but is recalled before he can undertake the reduction of Ireland. Across the narrows of Scotland he left a line of military stations, where, in the following century, Antoninus Pius erected a turf rampart on a foundation of stone. The wall of Antoninus marked the furthest limit of the Roman province:

"The masters of the fairest and most wealthy climates of the globe turned with contempt from gloomy hills assailed by the winter tempest, from lakes congealed in a blue mist, and from cold and lonely heaths, over which the deer of the forest were chased by a troop of naked barbarians."

⁵ Robertson, *op. cit.*, par. 4.

The historian halts his rapid narrative to gaze, from that primitive Maginot Line, over heath and clouded hill; for in the wall of Antoninus he sees the furthest mark of the Roman power. Here at last the war eagles have settled, their wings heavy with accumulated victory. This is not simply a picturesque touch: it is a symbol expressing to the imagination what the intelligence may collect elsewhere.

Gibbon never lets his readers gape long at the façade. Sometimes his warnings are oblique, sometimes grave and direct. Even in the resounding opening paragraph we note that the inhabitants enjoyed "and abused" their advantages, that a decent respect was paid to the "image" of a free constitution, and that the senate, which "appeared" sovereign, had resigned real power to the emperors. As the chapter proceeds, these hints are expanded. The legions—and even the cavalry—were now manned by provincial mercenaries, without the patriotism that had made Rome's armies nearly invincible "in the purer age of the republic." The body had outlived the spirit, for "in proportion as the public freedom was lost in extent of conquest, war was gradually improved into an art, and degraded into a trade." After an impressive description of the Roman discipline, Gibbon is careful to remind us that this was a discipline imposed as a substitute for the valour and loyalty of free citizens.

In Chapter ii Gibbon's theme is somewhat more complex. In effect, he is to give a broad view of life in the Empire. Religious toleration (a subject that skilfully prepares for a later argument) and the extension of citizenship, along with a common Græco-Roman culture, give a certain homogeneity to the chequered population. The face of the land is next described: the eye passes over cities and roads and fleets and vineyards, resting for a moment on the aqueduct of Herodes Atticus or the Forum of Trajan; and one shares the civic pride that the Roman world (or at least the free half of it) had reason to feel. Even here it would be easy to gather—e.g., from references to "the purest ages of the commonwealth" or the ancient "modest simplicity of private houses"—that this was by no means Gibbon's "ideal state of society"; but for the greater part of the chapter his main concern is elsewhere. The tale of opulent cities, splendid public works, the fruits of the earth, the riches of commerce—all mounts to a climax, and Gibbon pauses to remind us that "the tranquil and prosperous state of the empire was warmly felt, and honestly confessed, by the provincials as well as Romans."

But now—in the last three paragraphs of the chapter—he makes his own comment:

“It was scarcely possible that the eyes of contemporaries should discover in the public felicity the latent causes of decay and corruption.”

Strange that Gibbon should detect in the men of the Second Century the very blindness and partiality for which he has himself been arraigned by Toynbee and Stephen! He proceeds to describe the “slow and secret poison” that was sapping the Empire’s life: the decay of genius and “public courage”, the literary parasitism that “precluded every generous attempt to exercise the powers, or enlarge the limits, of the human mind”, a general spiritual, cultural, and political decline. In the last paragraph the opinion of “the sublime Longinus” (that servitude breeds spiritual pygmies) is cited, and the chapter ends—Gibbon well knows the force of last words—as follows:

“This diminutive stature of mankind, if we pursue the metaphor, was daily sinking below the old standard, and the Roman world was indeed peopled by a race of pygmies; when the fierce giants of the north broke in, and mended the puny breed. They restored a manly spirit of freedom; and after the revolution of ten centuries, freedom became the happy parent of taste and science.”

Could it possibly be made clearer that the force of life was spent in Roman society, or could any candid reader think Gibbon unaware that this was a “deathlike trance” and an “Indian summer?”

Chapter iii (on the government of the Empire) is the most emphatic of all. It opens by asserting the principle of limited monarchy:

“A martial nobility and stubborn commons, possessed of arms, tenacious of property, and collected into constitutional assemblies, form the only balance capable of preserving a free constitution against enterprises of an aspiring prince.”

It proceeds to a scathing analysis of the veiled tyranny of Augustus and the “pleasing dream” of his subjects, indicates the menace of the army, and sketches the disasters that must befall a state where authority is wielded by one man and based on armed force. The few pages on the Antonines form a golden interlude; but we are reminded (immediately after the famous passage quoted by Stephen) of “the instability of a happiness

which depended on the character of a single man". The closing impression is not of the Antonines. The memory of the tyrants looms behind a momentarily benevolent despotism; the horror of servitude is shown as intensified by the tradition of freedom and the impossibility of escape; and the chapter ends with the dreadful words of Cicero to the exiled Marcellus: "Wherever you are, remember that you are equally within the power of the conqueror." Thus is the transition from Marcus to Commodus prepared.

Gibbon knows just as well as Professor Toynbee that the peace of the Antonines was precarious and autumnal. He knows just as well as Stephen that Roman society was moribund. As an artist, he emphasizes the contrast between the splendour of this Indian Summer and the tempestuous winter of the Third Century. The contrast, however, is not between a healthy and a diseased, but simply between a happy and an unhappy society. Gibbon depicts the prosperity, admires the governors, and sympathizes with the tolerant civilization of the Antonine Empire; but he makes it abundantly clear that it is not his political ideal. On the contrary, he repeatedly emphasizes its decadence and instability, and he loses no opportunity of expressing his preference for the Republic. Again and again the *Decline and Fall* provides a political commentary⁶ on his description (in the Autobiography) of private independence as "the first of earthly blessings." In his "ideal state of society" liberty is essential.

But, as Gibbon has said,⁷ it is well to fix the meaning of a word as vague as "liberty". His own ideal was adumbrated, not by the second-century Empire, but by eighteenth-century England. The references in the Autobiography ("this free and fortunate island", "free and enlightened country") are familiar; and in an address⁸ of 1793 he says that "Britain perhaps is the only powerful and wealthy state which has ever possessed the

⁶ Thus, in Chap. xlv (on Roman law), he embraces "the occasion to breathe the pure and invigorating air of the republic." At the close of Chap. xxxi he hazards the suggestion that "under the mild and generous influence of liberty, the Roman empire might have remained invincible and immortal." He is prepared to admire the principle of freedom even in Germans (Chap. xxxviii) or Popes (Chap. xl).

⁷ Of the freedom promised by Arbacus: "Mais il est bon de fixer l'idée précise d'un mot toujours vague en lui-même, et assez étranger au langage des Orientaux" ("Mémoire sur la Monarchie des Mèdes", *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. 1814, vol. iii, p. 71).

⁸ *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. 1814, vol. iii, p. 560.

inestimable secret of uniting the benefits of order with the blessings of freedom." He disapproves despotism as he does the "wild theories of equal and boundless freedom" that emanated from France in his late years. He is no doctrinaire. What matters is, not the form, but the effects of government;⁹ and England under the Georges offered a combination of material and spiritual advantages ("benefits" and "blessings") that was not to be had under the Antonines. He approved the freedom which his country had established, and which had attracted, not without reason, the admiration of Europe. His view of the Antonine Age may be compared with Fielding's (no one thinks him a henchman of tyrants!) in *Tom Jones*, Book XII, Chap. xii:

"And here we will make a concession, which would not perhaps have been expected from us, that no limited form of government is capable of rising to the same degree of perfection, or of producing the same benefits to society, with this [i.e., a wise and virtuous absolutism]. Mankind have never been so happy, as when the greatest part of the then known world was under the dominion of a single master; and this state of their felicity continued during the reigns of five successive princes. [A note names the Antonine emperors.] This was the true era of the golden age, and the only golden age which ever had any existence, unless in the warm imaginations of poets, from the expulsion from Eden down to this day."

Gibbon, as we have seen, thought the Antonine Age far from golden; but, like Fielding, he accepts the commonplace that an all-wise and benevolent despot would make an ideal ruler—if we could be sure of getting one, let alone a succession of them.

Why should this commonplace have escaped Sir Leslie Stephen? The high temperature of his age and the course of his argument probably account for it. He has been influenced by the romantic reaction, and his context is religious. For him Gibbon is the type of shallow infidelity. His early conversion to Catholicism was a mere affair of the head—"he believed in Catholicism as he might have believed in the authenticity of a disputed document"—and he was incapable of understanding

⁹ Cf. a late passage in the *Autobiography*: "While the aristocracy of Berne protects the happiness, it is superfluous to inquire whether it is founded in the rights of man: the economy of the state is liberally supplied without the aid of taxes; and the magistrates *must* reign with prudence and equity, since they are unarmed in the midst of an armed nation." Students of Gibbon will note that the smallness of this state and the healthy independence of its citizens are relevant considerations.

“the spiritual significance of Christianity” or the true causes of Christian zeal. Stephen does not mention the fact that Gibbon accepted a hard exile for his change of faith; nor does he pause to examine Gibbon’s politics when half a famous paragraph seems to give such ready support to his views on Gibbon’s religion.

As for Professor Toynbee, he himself provides the necessary clue: “Whenever the writer of this Study reads this masterpiece of Edward Gibbon’s art, there rises up before his mind’s eye a vision of the Connecticut Valley as he once saw it . . .” He has, I suspect, fallen a victim to the artistic temperament. Rejecting (I think with insufficient examination) Gibbon’s main interpretation of the Empire’s decline and fall, he was ready to press the point of difference to some spectacular conclusion – and then, that glorious New England scene! How bring it in without Gibbon’s help? Each time he misread “his incomparable opening passage”, he saw again that autumn splendour of crimson and gold . . . But there is more to be seen than that.

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CHESTERFIELD AND FRANCE

England has produced very few people as intimately connected with France as the fourth Earl of Chesterfield. The famous *Letters to His Son* prove it; distinguished Frenchmen such as Renée, Sainte-Beuve, Paul Yvon, and the Duc de la Force have remarked upon it. Is it not then a little surprising that this aspect of Chesterfield's life has received such scant attention from English writers? It is well-known that Chesterfield was a famous politician, a clever diplomat, one of the wittiest and most elegant society figures of his time, as well as a scholar of no little merit. What is not well-known is that this versatile statesman was much more at home in France than in his own country. Not only was he the personal friend of the greatest intellects of his time, in particular of Voltaire and of Montesquieu, but he was one of the very first Englishmen who, having himself discovered the secret of French charm, spent the rest of his life in attempting to reveal it to others. Critics have so concentrated on the moral and educational value of the letters (the famous controversy still rages) that they have neglected to study the important rôle Chesterfield has played in bringing about the Entente Cordiale which exists today between the two great countries. The very fact that France elected him as a foreign member of one of its greatest Academies should have been more than sufficient to direct attention to his achievement in this field.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of heredity and environment in the development of Chesterfield. He was a man who made almost superhuman efforts to mould his own character. Among his paternal relations his cousin, the first Count of Stanhope, had been a great admirer and friend of France, but it was especially from his maternal grandfather, Halifax, that Chesterfield inherited his taste for the social and intellectual graces of the French. In his youth he had had the luck to be entrusted to the care of his grandmother, the Marchioness who had turned her home into a veritable salon, a place of reunion for English and French social celebrities. His early studies not only with her, but with a governess from Normandy, and later with a Huguenot refugee, M. Jouveau, had been planned to give him an extensive knowledge of the French language and literature, and to make him a man of the world.

At this period, upper-class English society was enamoured of

French fashions, and custom demanded that young men of good family should go to France to complete their training in an atmosphere vastly different from that of the Hanoverian régime. Unlike the majority of his compatriots, who spent their time sowing their wild oats and returned to flaunt a superficial knowledge of French fashions and "galanterie", Chesterfield strove to improve himself socially and culturally by adopting all that was best in French life, preserving withal a happy sense of proportion. His last trip, made in 1741, gave him a deep insight into the famous "salons" where he rubbed shoulders with France's intellectual and social celebrities. In this atmosphere he had discovered finally in what lay the real secret of the art of living, a secret which he was later to reveal to his son in his admirable course on the art of being an "honnête homme".

Although Chesterfield did not have the opportunity of returning to France after 1741, in his imagination he was a constant visitor, and when his son Philippe went off to the Continent in 1750, Chesterfield vividly re-lived his own experiences. Never has any father taken more care and interest in this important part of a son's education. In the letters which he wrote at this period, one can see to what a degree he loved France and the French. In Paris, Philippe was placed under the direction of three French ladies, whose task was to protect him from the company of his compatriots (whom Chesterfield never wearied of disparaging), to introduce him into the best societies, in short, to make him a little Frenchman. The father himself profited by his son's stay in Paris to keep in touch with everything which was happening across the Channel, and the teacher thus became one of the most diligent pupils. One will never know how many young people and English friends en route for France were beholden to Chesterfield for his valuable counsels and his letters of introduction.

However important the *Letters to His Son*, the collection of Chesterfield's French correspondence, so sadly neglected by his biographers, is of much greater value for the critic who would appraise his French activities. In this collection, Chesterfield reveals himself not only as an accomplished artist who has mastered all the fine points of the French language, as an illustrious savant who has studied deeply the spirit, history and literature of France, but also as a great and sympathetic friend who delighted in maintaining the most cordial relations between the two countries. His chief French correspondents were Mme

de Martel, Mme de Tencin, Mme du Boccage and Mme de Monconseil. The last-named was his favourite and his confidante. It was to her care that he entrusted his son at Paris; when seriously ill, he told her that her letters were the sweetest consolation of his sad life. From this correspondence, one can form a very accurate idea of the second half of his life, during which he interested himself keenly in all the distinguished Frenchmen and Frenchwomen who happened to be in England, kept contact with all his French acquaintances, and managed to introduce into the foggy, dull atmosphere of London some of the clarity and good taste of the French.

The friendship of Chesterfield with the great French writers of the eighteenth century proves that his interest in France was by no means restricted to the social graces for which this country was then, as now, famed. The chief writers with whom he was on familiar terms were Crébillon junior, Fontenelle, Voltaire and Montesquieu. Crébillon declared frankly that Chesterfield was the man and the critic whom he esteemed the most, and it was Chesterfield who introduced to the English public Crébillon's famous work *Le Sopha*. Fontenelle, grand old man of French literature, and chief arbiter of the social and intellectual graces, paid due homage to Chesterfield for his mastery of the French language and social arts. For his part, Chesterfield greatly admired Fontenelle's cold, rational outlook on life, his complete mastery over his own emotions, and held him up as a perfect example of the French "honnête homme". While Chesterfield's guest in London, Montesquieu had learned much from his friend about English politics, and his masterpiece *L'Esprit des lois*, which incorporated all that he had learned, was often quoted by Chesterfield as a learned and gracefully written work. Montesquieu was greatly flattered by Chesterfield's approbation of his work, and declared that his friend's criticisms and amendments (if necessary) would be valued more than those of any other man. When the great French writer died in 1755, Chesterfield wrote an appreciation of him in a London periodical; in a few brief words he summed up Montesquieu's great contribution not only to France and England but to humanity in general. Voltaire, who was also greatly indebted to Chesterfield, and who was certainly the latter's favourite author, paid him the finest and most sincere tribute he had ever received, when he told him that he had never been a charlatan nor the dupe of charlatans. And, after reading the famous *Letters*, in which he found

much of great interest, he declared that the author was the only Englishman who had ever recommended the art of pleasing as the primary duty of life.

As a literary critic, Chesterfield has been greatly disparaged even by eminent English writers. It is difficult to believe that a man who was so intimately connected with the greatest intellects of his time could be anything but a first-class appraiser of the works of others. His knowledge of French literature was vast; he mentions in his *Letters* more than 150 writers. He saw fit to include even those less significant figures who are no longer remembered today, and naturally so, for they were well-known personalities in their time. Chesterfield's philosophy, it should be remembered, embraced the whole art of living, and he could find something of use in the least important piece of writing. His literary tastes were those of an eighteenth century man of the world, but much less superficial than some critics would have us believe. Had he not won the esteem and friendship of France's greatest writers, and had they not eagerly sought his advice and comments on their work? Naturally, like his contemporaries, Chesterfield was marked by the taste of his age, and confessed it frankly. A sceptic and an uncompromising realist, he found little profit in the great imaginative masterpieces of the past. Rather did he prefer the literary productions of his own day, in particular the philosophical works of Voltaire, and the moral works of writers such as La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, and Mme de Lambert, in which he could find the worldly philosophy which most suited his aspirations. It is correct to say that in the field of French literature Chesterfield recommended very often those works which were veritable classics for those who desired to shine in society. But why did he apply himself to study works which he himself denounced as of little value? For the good reason that he loved French literature for itself, and discovered in it a charm, an indefinable something which was lacking in the literature of his own country. One should not forget the rôle which Chesterfield played as a popularizer of French thought in England and of English thought in France. In his correspondence with Mme du Bocage, for example, he took the greatest pleasure in facilitating the exchange of ideas and books between the two countries.

If Chesterfield had a profound admiration for France's intellectual culture, his love for French society life knew scarcely any limits. During his visits to Paris, he frequented the company

only of those who were recognized as the leading lights of French society, in order to model himself upon them even in the most trivial details. One has only to open his *Letters* at any page to realize the immense importance he attached to such an education, and the almost superhuman efforts he made to inculcate in his son, his godson, and many others, all the social arts of which France alone knew the real value. The *Letters* are, as Sainte-Beuve has said, a complete handbook of good-breeding and worldly wisdom, one of the most charming courses of worldly education that have ever been written. Right from olden times there have existed treatises of civility, of politeness, and of good-breeding, written with the intention of forming the ideal being, or at least of teaching man the secret of living happily with his fellows. From the point of view of comparative sociology this form of literature is extremely important. And in this respect the *Letters* of Chesterfield are a very important contribution, for his philosophy of life is a composite of two traditions — that of the English “gentleman” and that of the French “honnête homme”.

It is obvious from a reading of the *Letters* that what Chesterfield meant by the word “gentleman” did not correspond to the usual English acceptation of the term. Although he did not accept holus-bolus the French ideal of the “honnête homme”, he felt that a man could make a figure in the world only through contact with and appreciation of the French ideas. Chesterfield himself classified all his precepts on the art of living into three main categories: ethics, pedagogy and social practice. He stated very clearly the aim he proposed in his educational course: “It is”, he wrote to his son, “*first*, to do your duty towards God and man: without which, everything else signifies nothing: *secondly*, to acquire great knowledge: without which, you will be a very contemptible man, though you may be a very honest one: and, *lastly*, to be very well bred: without which, you will be a very disagreeable, unpleasing man, though you should be an honest and a learned one.” One should notice particularly the order in which Chesterfield places these three requirements. If, in the *Letters*, it would appear that he concentrated unduly on the third aspect, it should be remembered, and Chesterfield mentions it himself several times, that his son was deficient only in this respect. The part which France was to play in this course is just as clearly stated by Chesterfield: “I have often said, and do think, that a Frenchman who, with a fund of virtue, learn-

ing, and good sense, has the manners and good-breeding of his country, is the perfection of human nature".

Chesterfield's moral code might not be a code which would find favour amongst people of distinction today, and his remarks often seem inconsistent and contradictory. One should, however, keep in mind his aims. He was not a reformer: but he considered the French way of life infinitely preferable to the English. Anyone cognizant with English society in the 18th century will realize that the elegant and refined "galanterie" of French society at this time made a pleasant contrast to the crude vulgarity and gross debauchery of the Hanoverian epoch. Women, asserted Chesterfield, could make or mar a man's social and political career (the French idea), and being the supreme arbiters of all the social arts and graces, they should be courted and won. So Chesterfield, preserving a happy sense of proportion, giving an equally wide berth to the fierce puritanism of the "bourgeois" and to the "fashionable" debauchery of the English upper classes, sought his ideal in a moral code based on good taste and the proprieties.

In the domain of pedagogy, the ideas of Chesterfield concern the use to which a man of the world can put his knowledge so as to shine in social circles and be successful in the world of diplomacy and politics. Though Chesterfield was a little inclined to blame the French for their thoughtlessness and superficiality, he paid homage to France's really great authors, and declared that the French were not at all as frivolous as the English believed them to be. But if the French were perhaps not as learned as the English, they knew better how to make the most of their knowledge, without displaying it ostentatiously. Their power of conversation was infinitely superior to that of the British, for they alone knew the secret of combining learning and politeness, two qualities which, in Chesterfield's opinion, were intimately connected. "Mere learning without good breeding is pedantry, good breeding without learning is but frivolous, whereas learning adds solidity to good breeding, and good breeding gives charms and graces to learning". This theme, that of the perfect compatibility of the greatest learning and the most exquisite politeness, is a favourite one with Chesterfield. Montaigne was Chesterfield's master here, and the practical success of the theory could be seen in the charming manners of France's greatest writers.

In the third part of his plan, Chesterfield aimed to place his

son in the best society, so that he would have a chance of applying his knowledge in a practical sphere. It was only by mastering all the social arts that Philippe could show off his other talents to the best advantage and thus win success in the world. This final stage of his education was to be treated as a serious study and not as light amusement. His school was to be Paris society, his teachers, social figures of the highest distinction. Chesterfield's social philosophy owed much to La Rochefoucauld. An uncompromising realist like the latter, he believed that the first study of man should be man himself in all his complex and inconsequential aspects. Reason, which should guide the human being, rarely does so; it is rather the passions such as vanity and self-love which carry the day. Thus, in order to succeed in the world, one should exploit each man's dominant weakness, and only by the mastery of all the arts of pleasing would this be possible. And where could these be learned but in France? Chesterfield was fond of quoting La Rochefoucauld at every available opportunity, especially his maxim – "L'esprit est toujours la dupe du cœur", and he shared the Frenchman's cynical belief in the fundamental corruption of human nature. In his enumerations of all the methods of pleasing, Chesterfield backs up his remarks with references to French writers who had produced practical books for the same purpose. Many of the Abbé Trublet's hints on flattery and dissimulation can be found in the *Letters*; Chesterfield's definition of good-breeding as being the graceful sacrifice of one's own self-love to that of other people can be found substantially in the writings of Mme de Lambert, Trublet, and La Bruyère, all three recommended to Philippe, and in his emphasis on the indefinable essence, the *je ne sais quoi*, which was the very perfection of perfection, he interprets a chapter of Bouhours' *Les Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène* which he often praised in his *Letters*. There had, of course, been English writers before Chesterfield who had emphasized the importance of the social arts, but none who had gone so far. As one critic has put it:

"Generally speaking, it may be said that the English tradition is characterized by the desire of making others easy: the French, by the necessity of pleasing. That is to say, Chesterfield's French background is more specifically in evidence in his anti-rationalist explanation of the art of pleasing, in his anxiety to make an impression, to be *agréable* and in his revelation of a certain sensitiveness to the opinion of others and his conviction of the

gentleman's social responsibility". Chesterfield's avowed aim was to combine in his son the good solid common sense of the English and the charm of the French graces, fusing them into a harmonious unity. But it is not difficult to see that the French element of this combination was to be the most important.

One can see, from what precedes, the important place that France has occupied in the life and thought of Chesterfield. From his earliest years till his death, he never ceased not only to take a keen interest in all the aspects of French life and culture, but also to identify himself with all that was best in the French mind. Without ever renouncing the sentiments of noble patriotism and uncommon loyalty which bound him to his own country, whose constitutional monarchy was in conformity with his political aspirations, he saw in France a country where, in spite of its despotic government, the people had mastered the most difficult art of all, that of living in peace and harmony with one another.

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE *STANCES* AND *SONNETS DE LA MORT* OF JEAN DE SPONDE

After the stimulating study with which Professor Boase introduced the 1949 edition of Sponde's poetry¹ and his remarks on the same subject prefacing the recently published *Méditations*², not a very great deal can remain to be said, at least by way of intrinsic criticism, about the main work of this French "metaphysical" poet. However, there are, I believe, certain features of the *Stances* and *Sonnets de la Mort* the importance of which, for a close reading of the poems, has been somewhat obscured by the predominantly "metaphysical" approach. They are the subject of these very tentative reflexions.

Preoccupation with the idea of a possible parallelism between English metaphysical poetry and the French poetry of the late Renaissance not only led Professor Boase to rediscover Sponde's work, but put him on the track of those features which Sponde shares in some measure with John Donne: the fusion of thought and feeling, the exploitation of abrupt speech rhythms, the use of dramatic irony, and the use of the conceit, not merely for decoration, but for psychological expression. More recently, this metaphysical aspect of Sponde's religious verse, justifying the name of "Donne manqué" given to Sponde by Professor Boase, has been further explored by Mme de Mourgues in her valuable book *Metaphysical, Baroque and Précieux poetry* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1953). Mme de Mourgues agrees with Professor Boase that Sponde uses the "metaphysical" devices to express what she very usefully calls "the personal problems of both an intelligence and a sensibility struggling to obtain a coherent grasp on a situation implying metaphysical difficulties" (p. 150); but she also agrees that Sponde is relatively weak on the intellectual side (p. 61). This way of putting things, suggested by the comparison with the thought-packed verse of Donne, seems to me a little unfair to Sponde. I should prefer to say that a certain intellectual weakness, inability to obtain the "coherent grasp" in question, is an integral part of what Sponde's greatest religious poems very effectively – and very *coherently* – express. And that, I shall try to show, is a rather different matter.

¹ Jean de Sponde, *Poésies* (éd. Boase et Ruchon), (Genève, Pierre Cailler, 1949).

² Jean de Sponde, *Méditations avec un essai de poèmes chrétiens. Introduction de Alan Boase*, (Paris, Corti, 1954).

The *Stances* and certain of the *Sonnets* give strikingly coherent expression to a single emotional situation. The speaker is a devout believer who aspires to the serenity and security of the religious life but finds the striving difficult. He would like to transcend the flesh and to fix his gaze on the eternal life, but finds this longing for something *invisible* more than balanced by the strong claims of the *visible*, the here-and-now. He is pulled this way and that, tries to throw in the weight of his intellect and his faith on the side of Heaven, but is doomed to watch his soul abandoned now to one force, now to another. The upshot of this struggle, and of this helpless contemplation of struggle, is a sense of mental dispersion and exhaustion, and a desperate yearning for solidity and permanence.

The bare schema of the conflict is given an almost naturalistic treatment in Sonnet VII. The introductory play with the four elements, though somewhat awkwardly worked out, vividly conveys the tragically concrete form that this Heaven-earth conflict takes for the speaker: for him the question is literally one of trying to "breathe another air in this world's air",—solving the metaphysical problem in the flesh. At the same time, these images are caught up and swept along in an excited rhythmic movement that runs unbroken through the eight verses rhyming in *-ir* and *-ire*, and suggests, both by its continuity and its paratactic structure, the poet's sense of helplessness, intellectual helplessness, in the face of a self-perpetuating conflict. Then, in the sestet, the movement is very strikingly slowed down and broken up, as he comes despondently to realize the disintegration and alienation of the self which must result from the struggle of earthly and heavenly desires:

A la fin je me trouve en un estrange esmoy,
Car ces divers effets ne sont que contre moy:
C'est mourir que de vivre en ceste peine extresme.

Voila comme la vie à l'abandon s'espard:
Chasque part de ce Monde en emporte sa part,
Et la moindre à la fin est celle de nous mesme.

The situation is genuinely a tragic one, for any attempt to bring the conflict to resolution exacerbates it, and seems just to ensure the final dissipation of the spiritual forces themselves.

This self-perpetuating and ultimately destructive aspect of the conflict preoccupies Sponde, much more than the problems to be solved. A similar preoccupation is revealed, significantly, in

his somewhat earlier *Sonnets d'amour*, where the conflict (between the claims of the present and of the absent) has a real analogy with the conflict between the visible and the invisible in the religious poems. In one place (Sonnet XVII) he speaks of a "civil war" that cannot be brought to a conclusion because each of the two contestants is forever sharpening its blade upon the other; and elsewhere (Sonnet V), in lines whose general movement, sustained by echoing words and syllables, recalls the movement discussed above, we read:

Un chagrin survenant mille chagrins m'attire,
Et me cuidant aider moy-mesme je me nuis;
L'infini mouvement de mes roulans ennuis
M'emporte, et je le sens, mais je ne le puis dire.

Je suis cet Acteon de ses chiens deschiré!

Here too we have the "infinite movement" of a self-perpetuating and exhausting conflict: and then, foreshadowing the pattern of many of the religious poems, a characteristic weakening of the rhythm after the *rejet* into rather flat and strained statement.

The pattern in question, a tone of weakness and distress following agitation, recurs frequently in the *Sonnets de la Mort*, imposing itself even upon poems in which, on the face of it, it might seem to have no business. We find it, for instance, introducing an element of subjective expression into sonnets which would otherwise be mainly pieces of energetic moral reproof and admonition. Sonnets IV, V and IX are the main cases in point. Sonnet IX, in particular, deserves scrutiny, because it shows typical "metaphysical" devices at work (irony, antithesis, condensed images, conversational rhythms, elliptical questions), but combined in a very personal way with the tone of voice to which I am drawing attention. The poem is meant as an indignant and ironical denunciation of the idolatrous worshippers of this world. The first eleven lines present a picture of a whole society of worldlings, a worldly hierarchy of which every member flatters some more powerful flatterer, and every lord is someone else's valet. The second tercet, on the face of it, merely develops the sea image of the first in such a way as to wind up the sonnet with a statement of the right, the non-idolatrous, attitude to life. But, in fact, the twelfth line brings a change in *tone*, conveyed as much by the sound and rhythm as by the switch in perspective, from the point of view of the indignant preacher to the personal point of view of the poet.

Je vogue en mesme mer, et craindrois de perir
 Si ce n'est que je sçay que ceste mesme vie
 N'est rien que le fanal qui me guide au mourir.

Perhaps we are not altogether unprepared for this change; perhaps behind the excited anaphora, the impetuous movement and the harsh moral reproof of the earlier lines, there is an accent of distress. In any case, what is new is the sense of weakness and deflation that comes with the settling down of the rhythm and the predominance, after vehement rhetoric, of thin, contracted vowels and words of little or negative content³. We are compelled to read, not merely that the poet, adrift on the worldlings' ocean of ambition and flattery, *would* fear destruction but that he *does* fear destruction, and overcomes his fear only by the tragically inadequate assertion that life itself is just a beacon guiding him on his way towards death, the gateway to true life. Such a conclusion, far from rounding off the sonnet in Renaissance fashion, leaves us with a feeling of tension unresolved.

Sonnet IV has a similar pattern, although here the change of tone does not occur till the last line. Like Sonnet V it is directed ostensibly at the "enfants du siècle", but the abrupt questions, the broken rhythms, the harsh alliterations of the opening verses are not merely the rhetorical devices of contemptuous denunciation; they convey the strain and struggle to which the poet, himself a worldling, is subjected, and they make the final verse appear as something more than a harmonious conclusion—a sigh of helplessness called forth by the poet's own tragic situation.

Recognition of the very personal pattern to which I have been referring should add a nuance to our reading of even such a vigorous poem as Sonnet XI. Mme de Mourgues' phrase "abrupt vehemence" (p. 60) applies well enough to the greater part of this sonnet, but the tone of the last tercet requires closer definition. After the vehemently ironical questioning of the preceding stanzas, its first line has a new ring. It offers no satisfactory answers; it merely states—with characteristic simplicity and a sort of tragic intensity—a mystery that must be accepted: the necessity of the body's destruction as a preliminary to heavenly life. "Pour vivre au Ciel il faut mourir plustost icy". It is true, of

³ A somewhat similar point is made by Wladimir Weidlé in his suggestive article on Sponde in *Cahiers du Sud*, CCCVII (1951).

course, that this tragic intensity is largely due to what goes before, the gruesome and very villon-esque realization of the body's final corruption, strangely combined with pagan awareness of the harmony of body and soul and their potential greatness. But line twelve also shares with the last two verses of the sonnet an unmetaphorical literalness of statement that gives all three a peculiar poignancy. To live in Heaven, we must first die here. Yet death is no short cut to Heaven. We have no Enochs or Elijahs now. This is in no sense a culminating *pointe*, only an expression of weary resignation, puzzled no doubt and scarcely concealing the unresolved tension.

Enough now has perhaps been said for me to restate and develop the suggestion originally made. It is that while Mme de Mourgues is clearly right in saying that Sponde's lines are not often "packed with thought" (op. cit., p. 61), this is after all just as it should be. It does not make Sponde a "Donne manqué", but it is certainly one of the things that make him Sponde. For what his poetry very effectively expresses is the tragic predicament of the divided mind which *cannot* cope with its problems, which merely *sees* with overwhelming clarity the contradictions it is unable to resolve. This is pre-eminently the case in the *Stances de la Mort*. In the *Stances*, it is true, the rôle played by ratiocination might seem to be more important than in any of the sonnets. Is not this great poem a long dramatic monologue of the divided mind brooding on its own division, on the contrary attractions of the visible and the invisible, and on the paradox of death, which is both visible suffering and the gateway to invisible bliss? In fact, however, one searches in vain for anything recalling the wit, complexity and rich ambiguity of Donne's "passionate ratiocination". The poet of the *Stances* is not seeking to obtain a coherent grasp of the problems implied by the flesh-spirit dualism; he is giving a remarkably simple and concrete description of the way he feels the predicament of the flesh-bound spirit and the stress and strain resulting from any attempt at transcendence. There is, indeed, something movingly "simple-minded" and most "unmetaphysical" about the way in which Sponde feels and expresses the dualism in lines like

La Chair sent le doux fruit des voluptez presentes,
L'Esprit ne semble avoir qu'un espoir des absentes.
Et le fruit pour l'espoir ne se doit point changer.

And this simple-minded attitude does not lend itself to the manipulation of conceits, any more than it does to genuine argument. There are conceits to be found in the *Stances*; but they have such a simple intensity, the whole attitude underlying the poem forces us to construe them with such literalness, that the terms conceit and *pointe* seem oddly inappropriate. Even an elaborate image like that of the flickering light plunged into an abyss of darkness (representing the flesh-bound spirit in lines 85-90) has the same quality of directness. This is a far cry from the thought-provoking intricacy of Donne's intellectual conceits. It is a far cry too from the peculiar perverseness of some typical Donne conceits. The developed simile of the compasses in *A Valediction: forbidding mourning*, for instance, is characterized by a certain disproportion between the rational image and the lyrical feeling expressed, a disproportion of which the poet is surely conscious. We feel that here there is an element of intellectual play. Not so with Sponde. Between his images of light and darkness or fire and water and the tragic antinomy they express there is no such disparity. Sponde is fully committed to his image. The two strivings he seeks to reconcile are felt as having just this sort of elemental antagonism.

If the imagery of the *Stances* differs from John Donne's, it differs even more obviously from the imagery of another French Protestant, Agrippa d'Aubigné. Though it has, as we shall see, its concrete aspect, beside the rich, sensuous imagery of *Les Tragiques* it seems somewhat abstract and stark. This is the more significant because the antinomies with which Sponde deals in the *Stances* are also recurrent motifs in *Les Tragiques*. The difference in expression is linked, I suggest, with a fundamental difference in attitude, a radical difference in response to a common situation. D'Aubigné, like Sponde, was confronted with the great post-Renaissance antinomy of the body and the spirit, of the world and Heaven; he too experienced the old conflict, which the Renaissance had resolved in some measure by its optimistic notion of worldly self-realization, but which both Calvinism and the Counter-Reformation had revived and exacerbated by their attempt to force man's gaze away from the world to the ideal of other-worldly self-transcendence. D'Aubigné seems, in the face of post-Renaissance insecurity, to have escaped uncertainty, not by grappling with the intellectual problem of the two worlds, but by making himself, in this world, the violent propagandist of an other-worldly religion. Conflict, in his case,

is not merely repressed, it is crushed out of consciousness by an exaggerated and fanatical certainty, which expresses itself in *Les Tragiques* through energetic overstatement, massive accumulation, theatrical spectacle, and, above all, a superabundance of sensuous imagery.⁴ A recent writer on art styles (Wylie Sypher, in *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*, New York, 1955) suggests that orthodox Counter-Reformation art sought to overwhelm doubt by the very scale of its grandeur and the fullness of its confidence in fleshy images for the spiritual. In the same way, this French Huguenot poet, despite official Protestant disapproval of the sensuousness of Catholic art and ritual, finds relief from tension in self-assured violence and the confident accumulation of fleshy images for the transcendental. No doubt there is in *Les Tragiques* a certain concern with paradox (especially Sponde's favourite paradox of physical death leading to eternal life), but D'Aubigné's fascinated contemplation of paradox in the world expresses no inner tension. Tension has been overwhelmed.

Sponde's case is very different. He gets no easy access to supra-sensible reality by putting his trust in the fleshy image. Indeed, his great problem is precisely the difficulty of believing in spite of the invisibility and impalpability of God and Heaven;⁵ and one of the distinctive features of the *Stances* is, precisely, an honest concentration on the conflict itself, excluding any easy release through magniloquent overstatement and the fleshy image. The only escape Sponde can sincerely envisage is a sort of battling through the turmoil of the flesh, past the barrier of death, to some ultimate calm and repose;

Invisibles Beutez, Delices invisibles!
Ravissez-moi du creux de ces manoirs horribles,
Fondez-moy ceste chair et rompez-moy ces os:
Il faut passer vers vous à travers mon martyre,
Mon martyre en mourant: car hélas! je desire
Commencer au travail et finir au repos.

There is concrete imagery in the *Stances*, as these lines show; but, significantly enough, it is in large part an imagery of physical stress, of battering, piercing and breaking, of wave,

⁴ See Imbrie Buffum, Agrippa d'Aubigné's "*Les Tragiques*", *A Study of the Baroque Style in Poetry*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1951).

⁵ See in this connection the interesting passage from Sponde's *Response au Traicté des Marques de l'Eglise* quoted by Professor Boase in the *Poésies*, p. 128.

storm and shipwreck—a vocabulary dictated by that very pre-occupation with the strain of insoluble conflict which saves Sponde from imagery of the exuberant, doubt-obliterating type. This Huguenot poet who, in his meditations on the psalms, can often speak with the fiery intransigence of a non-conformist preacher, remains, in the more personal *Stances*, steadfastly at the stage of insecurity.

The *Stances* contain passages of what might be taken for imperious, self-assured rhetoric; but this rhetoric regularly fades into the language of exhaustion and despondency. The characteristic pattern is foreshadowed in the two opening stanzas. In the first, the poet bids his eyes be closed awhile: darkness, far from dimming their sight, will strengthen it to face the more dazzling brilliance of Heaven's glories. The imperious tone and the accumulation of somewhat excessive epithets seem momentarily to foretoken a descriptive development in the hyperbolic baroque manner. What follows in fact is an expression of weariness and despair, extremely moving in its simplicity and directness, and sharply contrasted with the images and rhythm of the preceding lines:

Je m'ennuye de vivre, et mes tendres années,
Gemissant sous le faix de bien peu de journées,
Me trouvent au milieu de ma course cassé.

As the long dramatic monologue of the divided self proceeds, we find this pattern recurring, sometimes reduced to a single antithetically constructed verse: "Tu surmontes tantost, mais tantost tu succombes"; but always with the accent on weakness, until the full extent of the spirit's entanglement in the flesh has been made manifest. Then, abruptly, with renewed vigour, the poet summons the spirit to muster its strength and burst its bonds asunder (stanza 16). But this new enthusiasm is ambiguous: at a certain pitch of exaltation, it reveals the depth of the weakness and fear it is seeking to cover up or overcome. In stanzas 17 and 18, in particular, where the poet calls upon his soul to see death as a bursting forth from the body's prison to true life, the emotion is deliberately forced to a note of hysteria ("Il faut rompre, il faut rompre . . ."); the poet, asking himself to accept a contradiction, is obliged to work himself up, to run in stanza 19 through a crescendo of paradoxes, culminating in the fundamental and most flagrant paradox, "Faisons, faisons naufrage, et jettons nous au Port." But this deliberately heightened

emotion cannot be sustained, and in stanza 22 it fades, just as the precipitate movement of the lines fades, to a cry of resignation. The appeal to God in the last two stanzas is equally resigned; but it is an appeal for aid, not in dying, but in living, and implies a final turning away from the near-baroque⁶ hysteria of the preceding stanza. The poet accepts life and with it the continuation of inner tension.

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⁶ Not fully baroque. I should prefer, like Sypher (see above), to keep the term *baroque* for that post-mannerist style (D'Aubigné's in *Les Tragiques* and Milton's in *Paradise Lost*) which resolves uncertainties and gives an effect of decision and release by its resplendent fleshy images and its energetic overstatement (Woelfflin's *Freude an der Stoffgewalt*). This use, close to that of many art critics, seem best calculated to illuminate the fruitful analogies between sixteenth and seventeenth century styles in literature on the one hand and in the plastic arts on the other.

In the light of this definition, based not merely on stylistic features but on their psychological *function*, Sponde appears as a poet saved from the baroque by his honest facing up to a problem he is unable fully to think out. In the same way, it is a certain simplicity of vision which prevents the poet of the often "conceited" occasional poems from becoming truly "metaphysical" in the more personal *Stances* and *Sonnets de la Mort*.

SOME ASPECTS OF ENGLISH PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT IN FRANCE

We are frequently told that Voltaire revealed modern English thought to the continent. Now Voltaire first mentioned England towards 1720. He set foot on English soil in May 1726. By 1733-4 the *Lettres philosophiques* gave lucid expression to Voltaire's reactions towards English religious, political, scientific and literary thought. Nobody need attempt to belittle Voltaire's role as the great popularizer of our social life.

Francis Bacon

However, fully a century earlier, almost all of Francis Bacon's philosophic works were translated into French. It would indeed be difficult in the course of studying 300 years of English "influence" to mention a greater personality, when studied from our comparative standpoint.

(a) In 1619, there appeared two separate French translations of Bacon's *Essays*:

*Essays moraux traduits en françois par le sieur
Arthur Granges, chevalier anglois, Londres, 1619.*

*Les Essays politiques et moraux, traduction de L.
Baudouin, Paris, 1619.*

Herein appears for the first time in French the use of the word "parti" in the sense of a "political party": "*des ligues ou des partis différens*" (p. 149).

(b) In 1624, these translations are followed by:

*Le Progrez et avancement aux sciences divines et humaines
. . . par A. Maugars, Paris.*

Herein we collect such new expressions as: 1. *culture de l'esprit*, (p. 442): "Au régime et culture de l'esprit." 2. *expérimentale* in the expression: *philosophie ou médecine expérimentale* (p. 285, p. 331): 3. *connaissances rationnelles* (p. 436).

(c) Yet again in 1632 we may quote the French translation:

*Neuf livres de la dignité et de l'accroissement des Sciences
. . . . traduits de latin en français par le Sieur de Golefer,
à Paris, 1632.*

In this translation there appear for the first time in French texts such words and expressions as

1. *âme sensible*, livre IV, ch. III: "C'est pourquoi ie nommeray la 1^{re} partie de la doctrine Universelle, de l'âme de l'homme, la Doctrine du Souffle, et la seconde la Doctrine de l'âme sensible ou Produite".
2. *chasse de Pan*, livre V, ch. II, p. 336.
3. *cultiver l'esprit*, passim.
4. *idoles philosophiques*, p. 367.

It is worthy of note that in this translation there appears also the oldest text containing the word *populaire* in such an expression as : *gouvernement populaire*. This use comes from England and penetrates completely into French usage at the time of the French Revolution of 1789.

In the simplest terms, we may state: Each time that a Frenchman in his written or spoken language uses any of the above terms, he is employing what are historically Anglicisms. This is not recognized by the most distinguished lexicographers, who make no reference to England in tracing the history of the foregoing words.

It would be tempting to digress on the fact that Francis Bacon stands far above Shakespeare in any international study such as this; and that from this viewpoint Milton's *Eikonoklastes* and *Arcopagitica* play a most important part in European thought long before Shakespeare's work exerts any influence at all. A French translation of *Eikonoklastes* appeared in 1652.

Thomas Hobbes

A second step takes us to the French translations of Thomas Hobbes:

—*Elémens philosophiques du Citoyen, traicté politique où les Fondemens de la Société civile sont découverts*, Amsterdam, 1649.

—*Le Corps politique, loi de nature*, 1652.

We read in the Préface of the *Elémens* (1649): "La condition des hommes hors de la Société civile (laquelle condition permettez moy de nommer l'estat de nature)."

This is the origin of the phrase *état de nature*, such as later Rousseau will employ it and modify the concept in accordance with his anti-Hobbesian teaching.

John Locke

By the end of the century, Locke was well known in France.

His *Essay* had appeared in part as early as 1688, when extracts appeared in French, even before the first English edition of 1690.

(a) In 1691 was published the translation "*Du Gouvernement Civil*" at Amsterdam. Therein is the origin of the popularization of three common French terms:

confédératif, exécutif, fédératif.

Most French historical dictionaries do not mark these as Anglicisms. In Dauzat's dictionary (1938 edition), for example, *fédératif* is quoted from 1748 (Montesquieu). It may be noted, however, that *exécutif* is already in a translation of 1672 from English, (E. Chamberlayne, *Etat présent d'Angleterre*, 11, p. 79).

(b) In 1698 Pierre Coste, a prolific translator of English works, published his translation, "*De l'éducation des enfants*", at Amsterdam. We quote this merely to mention the interesting introduction in which the translator attempts to elucidate the meaning of *gentleman* to French readers.

(c) The year 1700 marks the outstanding moment when Coste gave a complete translation of *Essai philosophique concernant l'entendement humain* . . . (Amsterdam).

Here we note the new expression coined by Locke *association of ideas*: *association des idées* (p. 485).

However the translator was embarrassed by the original English; as we see him tentatively saying: *liaison d'idées, cette forte combinaison d'idées*, before he definitely asserts his originality with: *association des idées* (p. 485).

Elsewhere in this same translation we can collect such technical expressions as arguments *ad verecundiam*, *ad ignorantiam*, *ad iudicium*; and *évidence immédiate* to translate *self-evidence*.

From 1700 to 1800 there is an unbroken array of "borrowings" from English thinkers:

Robert Boyle

The Oxford English Dictionary quotes *materialist* in 1668. Eucken considers that this word was created by Robert Boyle, who used it in *The Excellence and Ground of the Mechanical Philosophy* (1674).

Matérialisme is used by Leibnitz (1702) in his *Réplique aux Réflexions de Boyle* (éd. Erdman, p. 186). Once again French lexicographers have failed to note any English influence in this word, and quote it from 1748 only.

Thomas Hyde

The O.E.D. editors were not aware of the fact that *dualism* was created by the Oxford professor, Thomas Hyde, in his *Historia Religionis Veterum Persorum* (Oxonii, 1700). Two years later Bayle recognizes this in his article *Zoroastre*, in the second edition of the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (tome 3c, p. 3082). One edition of a recent French etymological dictionary cites *dualism* only in 1755 and makes no reference to England (Dauzat, *Dictionnaire étymologique*, Paris, 1938).

John Toland

Better known is the fact that in 1705 John Toland created *Pantheist*, (*Socinianism truly stated*). The word is borrowed in France in 1712 by E. Benoist, *Remarques Critiques* (p. 256). It is strange to remark that *pantheism* is coined by Toland's rival, Fay, in 1719, and appears as *panthéisme* in the same French text (1712) as quoted above for *panthéiste*.

The present writer has collected some three hundred terms in "ism" that the English language has adopted from French since the beginning of the 17th century. Very few words in "ism" have been coined in England. A study of French coining in "ism" appeared last year in the *Mélanges offerts à Charles Bruneau* (Paris, Droz).

Ralph Cudworth

According to Lalande (*Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, revu par MM. les membres et correspondants de la Société française de philosophie), the word *theism* was coined by Ralph Cudworth. This term became French in the first years of the 18th century, when Bayle wrote in the *Réponse aux questions d'un provincial* (III, 13, 1705): "Je me sers de ce mot à l'imitation des Anglais pour signifier en général la foi à l'existence divine."

Joseph Addison

It may seem strange to include Addison's name in this list. However, two frequently used terms penetrate into French usage in translations of Addison.

(a) In *Le Spectateur ou Socrate moderne*. We meet there the term *égotisme* (ed. 1737, VI, 10) as well as *égotiste*. Dauzat quotes this word in 1755 only, and we may recall that Dauzat's dictionary is a relatively recent contribution to French linguistics.

However the O.E.D. states that Addison probably found this word in Jansenist writings.

(b) In *Le Freeholder*, 1727, we find *moraliste*, (p. 215). In English *moralist* is found in 1621. Dauzat again has found nothing earlier than 1762. (Bloch and Wartburg give 1690).

Antony Collins—

No doubt can possibly be expressed as to the fact that *libre-penseur* and *liberté de pensée* are translations of *free-thinker* and *free-thought*. The author of this article has beside him 23 quotations which can leave no doubt in this matter. These expressions, together with the already quoted *expérimental*, and such a word as *comité* or *club*, represent the supreme contribution of English thought to the Continent.

In 1713, *A Discourse of free-thinking occasion'd by the rise and growth of a sect call'd Free-thinkers* appeared in London, and was written by Antony Collins.

The following year we note the translation:

Discours sur la liberté de penser, écrit à l'occasion d'une nouvelle secte d'esprits forts . . . à Londres, 1714. Any expression containing the word *libre* or *liberté* in the 18th century must needs have a great interest in the development of liberal and revolutionary doctrines. *Libre-pensée* is an expression popularized by Voltaire. It would be easy to quote others, notably the *free Mason* which became first *Libre maçon* (1737), and ultimately *franc-maçon* (1740). In this last field the word *fraternity* was popularized so as to become one of the ultimate Revolutionary symbols. Both Ferdinand Brunot and Daniel Mornet have traced the revolutionary *fraternité* to masonic origins in 18th century France.

On less certain ground, we may refer to an article by E. von Jan, on the semantic development of the word *Humanité* (*Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, 1931, pp. 1-66). The author derived the modern use of *humanité* largely from English sources.

"Mylord" Shaftesbury

The works of Shaftesbury in translated form are important contributions to 18th century French philosophy.

In 1709 at La Haye was published "*Lettre sur l'enthousiasme*". In 1745, Denis Diderot made his literary début by translating the *Essai sur le mérite et la vertu*. It is very probable that the

pejorative use of *enthousiasme*, as the anthithesis of *raison*, comes from English use. We can quote it in French as far back as 1649, in a pamphlet dealing with English events: 1649 *Remonstrance des ministres de la province de Londres adressée par eux au général Fairfax*, p. 4: "de ces enthousiasmes et de ces diaboliques inspirations".

This derogatory shade reappears in the 1700 translation of Locke's *Essay*. It is certainly popularized by Shaftesbury's attacks. In Diderot's translation of 1745 we mark the original use in French of *démonisme* and *démoniste*.

We have not, however, been sufficiently alert to record the translation of Shaftesbury's expression *self-control* (1711, *Characteristics*, III, 260 note).

David Hume

By 1760, five volumes of translations of Hume's work had appeared in Amsterdam (*Essais philosophiques sur l'entendement humain*, 1758-1760).

The modern connotations of the philosophical terms *foi implicite* and of *conventions* derive from Hume.

Foi implicite, 1759, tome 3e, p. 85: "Et il y a mille contre un à parier que ces mêmes nations auront dans leurs symboles des articles tout aussi absurdes auxquels ils ajouteront une foi implicite et qu'elles maintiendront avec le plus profond respect."

Even in contemporary French, *implicite* remains a rather technical philosophical term and is not currently employed.

Conventions, *ibid.*, 1760, p. 265, addition 11. For the history of these words it is advisable to consult A. Lalande, (*op. cit.*, éd. 1932, p. 29). Hobbes had already used *conventions* in this sense.

Thomas Reid

With Thomas Reid we open a long and important chapter of philosophical history that extends well into the 19th century. We need only recall the importance given to *faculty* psychology teaching when Jouffroy wrote in 1828: *Des facultés de l'âme humaine*.

In 1768 was published at Amsterdam: *Recherches sur l'entendement humain d'après les principes du Sens commun*. *Sens commun* in the Reidian sense is already, we note, in the title. *Facultés* appears at page 8.

"*Facultés*: Par le grand nombre de facultés que nous possédons."

It would be once again tempting to dwell on other personalities, not essentially philosophic, and to point out in detail the very complex influences of Scottish thought at this moment, not only with Adam Smith, MacPherson and Smollett. But mere mention of this fact must suffice here.

Jeremy Bentham

From Reid's translation we traverse the revolutionary period and reach again far into the 19th century.

Translations of Bentham's works are numerous.

- Panoptique*—*Mémoire sur un nouveau principe pour construire des maisons d'inspection*, Paris, 1791.
- Traité de législation civile et pénale, précédés de principes généraux de législation et d'une Vue d'un Corps complet de droit . . .* par Et. Dumont de Genève, Paris, an X (1802).
- Essai sur la nomenclature et la classification des principales branches d'Art et Sciences*. Ouvrage extrait du *Chrestomathia*, de Jérémie Bentham, Paris, 1823.
- De l'organisation judiciaire et de la codification*. Extrait de divers ouvrages de J. Bentham, Paris, 1828.
- Déontologie, ou Science de la morale*, ouvrage posthume de J. Bentham, Paris, 1828, 2 volumes.

Panoptique: In the first translation the word *panoptique* appears in the title. It returns in 1797 (*Bibliothèque Britannique*, mai, p. 160), and from 1802 onwards it is frequently used.

Utilité. In the same *Bibliothèque Britannique* of 1796 (III, p. 142) we read:

"Le fondement sur lequel M. Bentham bâtit son système de morale et de législation est le principe d'*utilité*". *Utilitarien* soon follows. In a *Letter* written by Bentham to his translator, Et. Dumont, Bentham regrets the use of the word *benthamite* and proposes *utilitarien* in French. (In English *utilitarian* is quoted in 1781).

Utilitarisme: We have not found this form before 1831: *Le Semeur*, pp. 36, 60, 78, 89. The leading French dictionaries quote it from 1846 only.

Utilitaire: *Utilitaire* appears in 1834 (*Revue de Paris*). It is constantly used in a derogatory sense by Théophile Gautier, in the Preface of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. For Gautier the utilitarian outlook is the enemy of the aesthetic doctrine of *Art for Art's sake*. The outstanding linguistic addition of Jeremy Bentham is the word *International*.

International was quoted by Bloch from 1836 as a Latinism. Here is its exact "birth" in the French language.

"Le second est celui qui règle les transactions entre les souverains et les nations. On pourroit l'appeler exclusivement *Droit inter-national* (1)."

"(Note: Ce mot est nouveau, mais analogue et facile à comprendre. Il n'y a que la force de l'habitude qui puisse faire conserver un terme aussi impropre, aussi dépourvu de signification que celui de *Droit des gens* . . .)."

—Extract from *Traité de Législation civile et pénale* . . . par M. Jérémie Bentham, à Paris, An X, vol. 1, p. 146.

It is worthy of note that the greater part of Bentham's precise terminology is known in France by 1802: He says for example at page 4 of this same *traité*: "Je suis partisan du Principe de l'Utilité lorsque je mesure mon approbation et ma désapprobation d'un acte privé ou public sur sa tendance à produire des peines et des plaisirs; lorsque j'emploie les termes *juste, injuste, moral, immoral, bon, mauvais*, etc. . . .".

Two other terms appear in the 1825 translation quoted at the beginning of this paragraph.

Chrestomathia (Préface), et *Déontologie*, p. 231: "Science du bien et du mal."

In the 1828 translation, we can quote: *pannomion*, p. 337.

Service: It is here also that the word *service* starts its modern vogue, which is today as great in France as in England and America. It appears at pp. 82, 89, 90: . . . *Le bien du service; assiduité du service; chaque omission de service*, etc., etc.

Sensualisme: This word appears in French at the beginning of the 19th century (1803). We cannot dogmatically assert that it is borrowed from English. Lalande, *op. cit.*, points out that *sensualist* was already frequently used in English and quotes George Berkeley, *Alciphron*, 11, 216, (1732).

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